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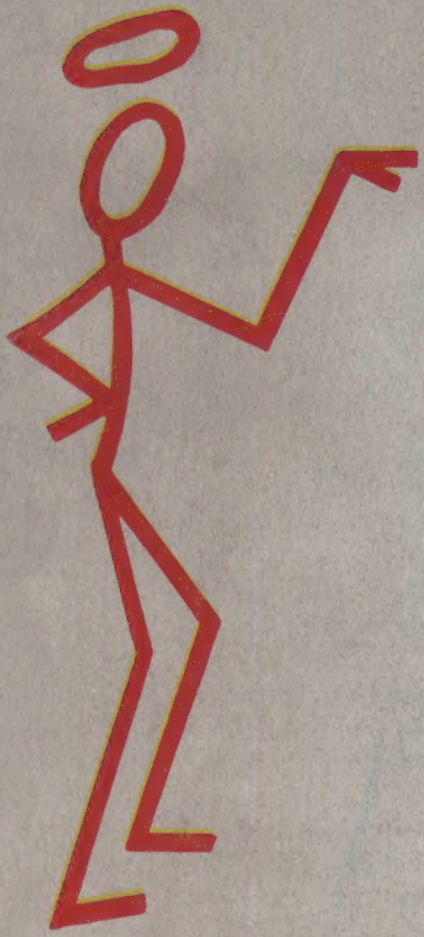
THE saint DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS



The Burnt Cigarette
by BEN AMES WILLIAMS

In Line of Duty
by THOMAS WALSH

The Cafe Sinister
by BEN HECHT

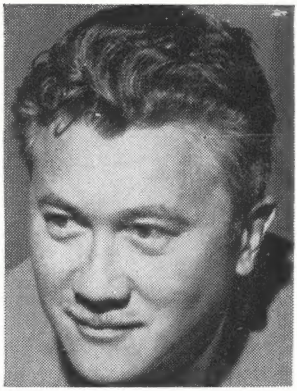
The Devil's Wind
by E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Portrait of Murder
by GEORGE HARMON COXE

THE OLD TREASURE HUNT
A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

A KING-SIZE PUBLICATION



Our lead novelet this time, PORTRAIT OF MURDER, by George Harmon Coxe, provides the first appearance in this magazine of a character named Flash-Gun Casey. But this is by no means Mr. Casey's debut in the world of detective fiction. Those reckless readers who squander whole dollars on books in hard covers, or steal them from public libraries, will recognize him from several novels published by Alfred Knopf; while the thrifty souls who get their excitement for free on the radio, paying only the penalty of the commercials, should also find him a familiar acquaintance. For the benefit of those who fall into neither category, and also have pointed heads, we shall only confirm that Mr. Casey, as his names implies, is indeed a photographer; and although he does not snap Marilyn Monroe we think you will find this story well stacked with excitement.

Anyone who edits a magazine of this kind is bound to print more than one perfect-crime story; so although we have featured this theme before we are not a bit coy about giving it another play, especially when it is handled by a writer in the class of Ben Ames Williams, who gives us his slant on the theme in THE BURNT CIGARETTE. If you have been worried about the influence of smoking on cancer, this story shows that a cigarette can give you more than one kind of pain in the neck.

Hitler and his Nazis seem almost as ancient history now as Attila and the other Huns, yet there are still plenty of people alive who suffered from the antics of the bully boys. So we think that a story of revenge for a wrong done back in the prime days of Schicklgruber, like CAFE SINISTER by Ben Hecht, is far from dated yet.

However, for those who prefer their period pieces in a more traditional setting, we have THE DEVIL'S WIND by E. Phillips Oppenheim, a murder story laid in Mr. Oppenheim's favorite mystery vineyard, Monte Carlo.

If there is a Forgotten Man in detective fiction, he is certainly the sleuth who actually wears a genuine official badge. So just to prove that this magazine really has nothing against ordinary cops (except the kind who hand out traffic tickets) we proudly present IN LINE OF DUTY, by Thomas Walsh, with a real policeman for a hero.

But of course we can't pretend that our favorite character isn't still a kind of pirate. We'll let you read THE OLD TREASURE HUNT and guess who that is.

Cecil Charles.

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THE SAINT DETECTIVE MAGAZINE, VOL. 2, NO. 4, published monthly by KING-SIZE PUBLICATIONS, INC., 471 Park Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y. Subscriptions 6 issues $2.00, 12 issues $3.75, single copies 35c. Foreign postage extra. Entered as second-class matter at the post office, N. Y., N. Y.
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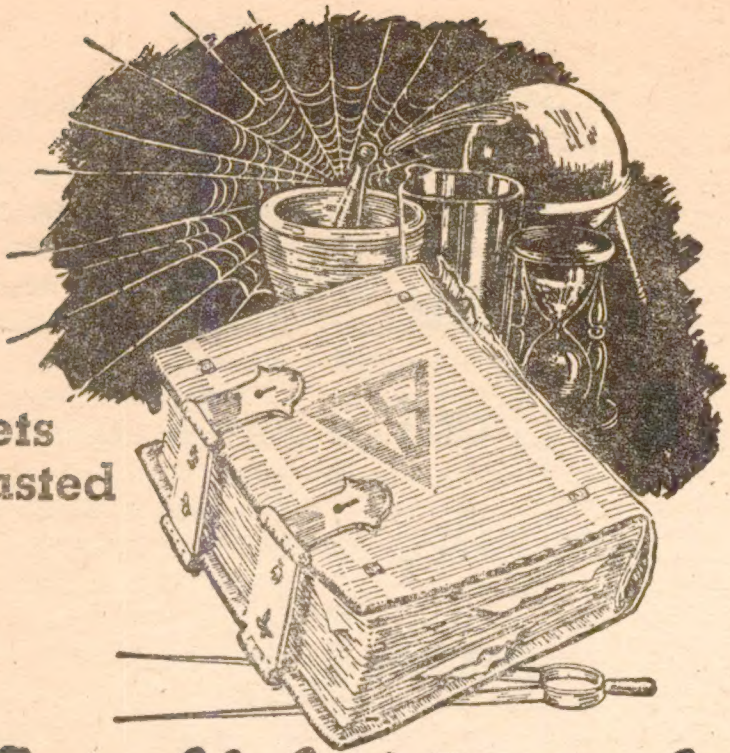

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the old treasure hunt

by . . . Leslie Charteris

The cruel sea had made a death trap of the treasure ship. In its chill shadow Templar saw—the lurking presence of a killer.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS are named together as one geographical group, but some of them belong to Great Britain and some to the United States. And thereby hangs this tale.

"You see, the treasure is right in the middle," April Mallory told the Saint.

"How awkward of it," murmured Simon Templar.

Christopher Columbus discovered the islands east of Puerto Rico on his second voyage, in 1493, but Spain did nothing about them. The British occupied Tortola in 1666, and enlarged their claim to the islands east of there. The islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John changed hands several times, but were held longest by the Danes, until Denmark sold them to the United States in 1917.

Now between the island of St. John and the island of Tortola to the northeast of it runs a strip of water once called, rather pompously, Sir Francis Drake Channel, known to the buccaneers more picturesquely as the Virgin's Gangway, and shown on modern charts, in a dull modern way, as The Narrows. But today's com-

IN THE BLUE CARIBBEAN WHERE SHARDS OF CANNON RUST THE SAINT BATTLES CRIME IN A NEW MYSTERY THRILLER.

paratively dull name, like many prosaic modern things, is unarguably efficient, at least as a description; for the channel is most certainly very narrow, as such straits go, being in places less than two miles across.

"So what you might call the frontier runs somewhere through there," April Mallory explained. "But even the maps only show a dotted line which they call 'approximate.' Apparently England and America never had a full-dress meeting to decide exactly where to draw it. They got along fine anyway, the English on one island and the Americans on the other, with nothing to squabble about in between. Until now, when it's a question of whose sea bottom the treasure is on."

The Saint sipped his Dry Sack.

"That isn't in the script," he objected.

"What script?"

"The one Jack Donohue lent me."

"And who's he?"

The Saint sighed.

"Someone has to be kidding somebody," he said. "But I'll play it straight, if you like."

"I wish you would."

"From the very beginning?"

"Please."

"All right. Columbus named them the Virgin Islands because there seemed to be an awful lot of them."

"That was in 1493," April said brightly.

"Christopher was thinking specifically of the legend of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins from Britain," said the Saint reprovingly. "Who were massacred by the Huns somewhere around Cologne in stalwart defense of their virtue."

"What were they doing there?"

"I believe they'd been on a trip to Rome, among other things. A sort of medieval Girl Scouts' junket."

"When was this?"

"Oh, more than a thousand years before Christopher."

"I don't suppose England will ever replace them now," April said. "But you don't need to go back quite that far. Let's get more contemporary."

"Meaning around the time we picked each other up?"

"If you can't make it sound any more romantic."

It was true, however. An hour ago they had set eyes on each other for the first time, seated on adjacent stools at the bar of the Golden Galleon, a newly opened place of refreshment in the town of Charlotte Amalie, which is the town of the island of St. Thomas; and it can be stipulated that all eyes were taken with what they saw.

She had clear blue eyes and light red-gold hair, and a face and figure that any pirate who ever trod those islands would have rather captured than any galleon;

and with the same clear blue eyes and bronze swashbuckler's face the Saint looked every inch as much a pirate as any man ever could have, even in such an imitation galleon as that. So that it had been very easy to strike up the conversation which just lately seemed to have gotten slightly out of hand.

"Okay," he said. "I know there's an outfit from Hollywood on location here, shooting footage for an epic entitled *Perilous Treasure,* in gorgeous Technicolor and colossal Cinemascope."

"I've heard of it."

"Jack Donohue is the director. He happens to be an old pal of mine. As a matter of fact, he wants me to double for the star in some skin-diving shots, on account of the hired hero is worried about sharks or something. That's why he let me read the script."

"How interesting."

"So if you're trying to hook me for some gag, darling, for publicity or anything else, I'm the wrong fish."

"I'm not talking about any movie script, and it's no gag," she said. "This is a real treasure."

Simon blinked. He could see now that she was completely serious.

"From pirates, yet?"

"In a way. It was a Spanish ship, the *Santa Cecilia,* loaded with gold from Mexico. Blackbeard the pirate got wind of her somehow, and he was waiting for her when she left Puerto Rico. He chased her around these islands and overtook her in the Narrows. Either his gunners hit her in the powder magazine with an unlucky shot, or the Spanish captain decided to sink her rather than be captured. Anyway, she blew up and sank before the pirates could get their hands on any of the loot."

"You look very young to remember all this so clearly."

"One of my great-great-et-cetera-grandfathers sailed with Blackbeard for a while. He kept a diary, and he drew a chart in it that shows exactly where the *Santa Cecilia* went down."

"Didn't Blackbeard or anyone else try to fish up her cargo before it got barnacles on it?"

"She sank in about eighty feet of water, and they couldn't swim down that far. They didn't have any diving apparatus in those days."

"But since then."

"The diary was handed down from father to son, and someone was always going to do something about it, but I suppose they got a little more skeptical with each generation, and somehow nobody ever quite got around to it. Until me."

"And you spill the whole thing to the first stranger you meet in a bar," Simon remarked pensively.

She shook her head.

"I'm not quite that dumb. I heard you give your name in that

last shop you were in, and I followed you."

"I didn't see you."

"I hope not. I was trying on a bathing suit in the back room. But they told me which way you'd gone. The pick-up was entirely mutual. I thought a damsel in distress could trust the Saint."

Simon nodded, and lighted a cigarette. His astonishment was already little more than a memory. An ordinary man would probably have still been gasping and goggle-eyed, if he were able to believe the girl at all; but to Simon Templar there was nothing too fantastic about a tale of sunken pirate treasure, or that it should be told to him.

In fact, the really extraordinary thing was that in all the time he had spent among those islands of the Caribbean which history and fiction had adorned with all the trappings of the Spanish Main, he had waited so long for his first direct contact with such an obvious story.

"What's your trouble?" he asked.

II

The other ingredients were almost standard for that kind of situation.

April was the last direct descendant of the Mallory who had sailed with Blackbeard. Her father had been shot down over Japan. April grew up and went to business school and after various experiments had risen to be an editorial assistant in a publishing house, where for forty hours a week in the office and uncounted hours at home she wrestled with strictly literary if not always literate adventure.

When her mother had died not long ago, and April had found herself not only relieved of the responsibility of a partial dependent but the heiress to a nest egg of almost eight thousand dollars, she had realized that such an opportunity was never likely to knock again, and had decided to take one reckless fling at real adventure before resigning herself to the relatively humdrum alternatives of marriage or career or their combination.

"So here I am," she said, "with a couple of aqualungs, and a boat that I chartered here, and that old chart. And it's true, Saint. The wreck's exactly where it's supposed to be. I saw it!"

"What did it look like?" Simon asked casually.

"Not a bit like they'd do it in the movies. But I was ready for that. You know, there'd be nothing left of a wooden hull that was sunk in these waters as long ago as that. The marine worms would have eaten it all up. And the iron rusts, and gets covered with coral. I'd read all about that in books."

She could have done that; but at least she wasn't trying to sell him the description of a picturesque movie-studio wreck, as

one sizeable category of inventors would have done. He could still swallow the story.

"But you were able to recognize something."

"The shapes of some guns, and cannon balls, things like that—even with coral growing on them. When you see it yourself, you'll know."

"But now," said the Saint, "there has to be a villain."

"There is."

"Name?"

"You may know it. Duncan Rawl."

Simon did know it. Duncan Rawl was a professional world traveler and self-styled adventurer who had made a very comfortable living out of his own tall tales. He had been almost everywhere and done almost everything, at least according to himself; and although there were certain spoilsports who claimed to know that his familiarity with the far places and his rôle in the stirring incidents which he recounted had been a lot less rich and glorious than the way he told it, their voices were practically drowned in the acclaim of the largely feminine audience which bought his books and subscribed to his profitable lecture tours.

Simon also recalled other anecdotes about Mr. Rawl's inclination to believe in and enlarge upon his own publicity, which had brought him into several news stories of unquestionable authenticity and somewhat less glamorous implication, which had promoted one sharp-tongued columnist to suggest revising his name to Drunken Brawl . . . Yes, Mr. Rawl had the makings of a most acceptable heavy.

"You'd met him through your job with the publisher," he said. "So when you decided to shoot your roll on this treasure hunt, you thought he was just the guy to go to for some expert advice."

"Only I didn't realize he'd be in quite such a hurry to cut himself in. I suppose I was a bit presumptuous to think I could call on him just because I'd helped to promote a couple of his books in the line of duty. I guess I'd have seen his point if he'd asked for a cash fee, or even a percentage. But I'm sort of stuffy about being told I have to do business in bed."

"Makes it too hard to concentrate, doesn't it?" said the Saint sympathetically. "And so you parted."

"But unfortunately I'd already shown him the chart."

"And let him make a copy?"

"He didn't need to. It's not that complicated. Look."

She took a folded paper from her purse and spread it out on the bar. It was a piece of thoroughly modern tracing paper, but the outlines on it were quite clear and easy to remember, even to the location of the X that marked the most important spot.

"This is my copy," she said. "I

took it from the original, and left that in a safe deposit in New York. But great-great-etcetera-grandfather was a good sailor, or he had a very good eye. If you put this next to a modern chart, you'd almost think that's what it was made from. The only difference is that the modern chart has a dotted line through the Narrows, here, for the 'approximate' boundary between British and American territory, and that line just about goes through the middle of the X. The little island up there, off the tip of Tortola, is called Great Thatch, and it's British. And the treasure seems to be just halfway between there and St. John, which is ours."

Simon signed to the bartender to refill their glasses, and glanced once more at the drawing. After that he could have reproduced it himself from memory, as accurately as from a photographic plate. It would not have been an altogether amazing accomplishment, and Duncan Rawl would not have needed to be a genius to duplicate it.

"So you located the wreck," said the Saint. "And then what?"

"I'd been down with a mask and the aqualung for nearly an hour—I'd probably have been down all day if my air hadn't started to run low. When I came up, there was another launch beside my boat, and it was flying the British flag. Duncan Rawl was running it, and besides his crew he had three native police from Road Town, on Tortola. They claimed we were in British waters and we had no right to be trying to salvage anything there."

"But it was all right for Rawl to try?"

"He'd set up a British company with a couple of native stooges, and he had a license and everything."

"So?"

"All I could do was argue that we were on the American side of the line, and try to talk everything to a standstill. I waved the Stars and Stripes and talked fast about Washington and ambassadors and the President. Those British cops are honest fanatics about legality and protocol, even way out here, and I got them worried enough to make them decide that the only safe thing for them was to halt everything until somebody higher up settled the problem. Even Rawl couldn't persuade them to let him go ahead and dive. I figured the treasure would at least be safe for a while, and I came back here and hired a lawyer."

"When was that?"

"Just over a week ago."

The Saint relaxed.

"Oh, for a moment I thought it was urgent. Now I see your problem. A decision will be handed down in about forty years, and you're wondering how your grandchildren will make out."

"No. It might have been that way, but the American Governor

and the British Governor are good friends. The British Governor comes over here to play golf, and the American Governor goes over there to fish. So they got everybody together and decided they ought to be able to settle it without any international complications. The first thing they said was, why didn't we join forces and split fifty-fifty."

"Duncan would have liked that, I suppose."

"But I wouldn't. Maybe he's got just as much legal right to anything he can find as I have, but I'm prejudiced."

"I don't blame you."

"So then they said, all right, suppose we agreed to dive on alternate days, and each kept what we brought up."

"Subject to taxes and other lawful tribute, no doubt."

"Of course. And if I hadn't agreed to that, you'd have been right, everything probably would have been tied up for forty years."

"When does this deal go into effect?"

"On Monday. And Duncan Rawl gets first crack!"

Simon raised his eyebrows.

"How come?"

"Those two Solomons decided that the only impartial way to settle that was to flip a coin for it. And I lost."

The blue eyes had clouded at last, and there was a gleam of rain-drops in them.

"That isn't necessarily fatal," he said.

"In clear water, as shallow as that, when we know exactly where the wreck is? In one full day, they could locate and haul up everything that didn't have to be turned up with dynamite. No, they could take out everything easy in the morning, and dynamite for the hard stuff in the afternoon. What'll be left on the second day won't even pay my expenses!"

Simon scowled through a meditative smoke-ring. Her estimate was probably close to the truth. Assuming that there was any such treasure to be salvaged as she had described it, the first party with a free hand for a day should be able to skim all the cream off it.

"Sounds as if we'll either have to whistle up a gale for Monday," he said, "or—"

"Or you can still settle for half, April," Duncan Rawl said.

He loomed up on the other side of the girl, leaning one elbow on the bar. Neither of them had seen him come in. But the Saint knew at once who it was, even before Rawl turned to the bartender and said, "The usual," and the bartender identified him with an impersonal, "Yes, Mr. Rawl."

There had been unkind critics who said that few Hollywood actors worked as hard at looking romantic as Duncan Rawl. He had the natural advantages of a broad-shouldered, six-foot-four-inch frame, and a flashing smile

that could light up a handsome wilful face, even if there was a certain tell-tale slackening of the important lines of waist and jaw.

But the carefully disordered blond curls with a battered yachting cap perched on the back of them were perhaps a little too consciously photogenic, as was a shirt of sufficiently unusual cut to suggest a theatrical costume rather than a piece of haberdashery, worn unbuttoned almost to the waist as if intentionally to display an antique gold locket hung on a gold necklace chain thick enough to anchor a small boat. At any rate, it could never have been said that he tried self-effacingly to look like any ordinary Joe.

"I'm not greedy," Rawl said insolently. "I'll still be satisfied with an equal partnership."

"Thank you," said the girl icily. "I don't want any charity from a crook. And I'm busy, if you hadn't noticed."

"Grow up, April. There aren't any proprietary rights to a treasure. It's finders keepers. The only reason you heard about this one first, if you'll stop and think about it, is because one of your ancestors was a criminal. So what have you got to be so righteous about?"

"So long as you're happy, why don't you just go away?"

Rawl lounged more solidly against the bar, and picked up the double shot of straight whisky which the bartender had poured. He didn't look a bit like moving.

Simon slid off his stool and came around on the other side of him.

"You heard what she said," he remarked pleasantly. "Why don't you drink that somewhere else?"

Rawl straightened up and measured him with a deliberate eye. Tall and sinewy as the Saint was, Rawl was two inches taller and forty pounds heavier. It was one of those rare occasions when the Saint looked as if he should have had more discretion. Rawl grinned confidently.

"How would you like to get it right in the kisser?"

"I'd love you to try," said the Saint mildly.

Rawl raised his glass, drank it down to the last few drops, lowered it, and then jolted the dregs straight at the Saint's face.

Incredibly, the Saint's face was not there to receive them. It moved aside in an almost instantaneous blur, and the flung liquor only sprinkled a couple of drops on his shoulder as it passed through vacant space.

As another integrated process of the same general movement, Simon's left fist sank like a depth charge into Rawl's stomach just at the bottom of his dashing décolletage. Rawl grunted and leaned forward from the middle, but he was still able to launch one vicious swing at the Saint's head. Only again the head was elusive. The

swing connected with nothing but air, and Rawl's own forward momentum only added a little extra verve to the encounter between his chin and the Saint's right cross.

Duncan Rawl hit the bar jarringly with his back and slid against it for a couple of yards on his way down, taking a few stools with him. His eyes were glazed before he reached the floor, and he lay there very solidly, as if he liked it there and had decided to stay.

III

"Please, sir," said the bartender courteously, "would you mind leaving now? I'm sure you could handle him again, but it's bad for business. And usually he breaks bottles."

"Please," April Mallory added for herself. "I was just going to ask if you'd take me to dinner."

"I just like to oblige everyone," said the Saint.

It hadn't exactly been a brawl to rank with the most Homeric bar-room brannigans in which Simon had ever participated; but it had clinched his acceptance of April's story, and assured him that he would have no sentiment to waste on Duncan Rawl. Therefore he had no regrets about it. Besides, a flurry of that kind was practically an obligatory incident at a certain stage of any good pirate-treasure story, and the Saint was rather a traditionalist about his stories. He liked to feel that all the time-honored trimmings were in their proper place. It encouraged a kind of light-hearted certainty that virtue, which of course he represented, would be triumphant in the end.

In this case, however, the odds against the conventionally satisfying outcome looked more forbidding as he learned more about them.

He took April to dinner at Bluebeard's Castle, where he was staying, because he had decided the first time he saw it that the view from the hillside terrace of the hotel over the landlocked harbor and the town of Charlotte Amalie could only be enjoyed to the full in the right kind of company, and the Saint also liked a seasoning of romance with his stories, which was another ancient and delightful tradition that he had no desire to violate.

But almost two hours later, while they were enjoying the view to the full over coffee and cigarettes and Benedictine, he had to admit that the rest of what he had learned seemed to have closed up possible loopholes rather than opened any.

"My captain's been ordered not to take me anywhere near the Narrows before Monday, and he's too scared of losing his license to play games. Rawl's crew is under the same orders from the Governor of the British islands," she told him. "But I can't even take you over for a look."

"You wouldn't have to go along," he said. "Since you showed me the chart, I could go straight to the spot from memory. Why couldn't I hire another boat and go there tomorrow? By the same token, what's to stop Rawl doing the same—or anyone else, for that matter?"

"Because the place has been guarded ever since this hassle started. My lawyer got the American Governor to send a coastguard cutter to anchor over there to protect my interests, and as soon as it got there a boatload of police from Tortola came out and tied up alongside to watch out for the British claim. The treasure couldn't be safer until the official hunting season opens at dawn on Monday."

It was then Saturday night.

"At least we've still got about thirty hours to develop an inspiration," he said finally. "Suppose we adjourn to your hotel now, where I hear they have dancing under the stars, and see if we dream up something there."

But when he finally left her that night, considerably later, they had still not dreamed up anything that was strictly related to the problem that had brought them together. Not that either of them felt that the time had been altogether wasted . . .

"Call me when you wake up in the morning," he said, "and we'll start again."

"I can't," she said. "I've promised to go to Caneel Bay for the day with my attorney and his wife, and they've been so sweet to me that I've got to do it. Besides, he's trying to come up with a last-minute inspiration too. But I'll call you as soon as I get back."

And that was another conventional obstruction, which at the moment he could have done without.

He was picking up his key at the desk of Bluebeard's Castle when a large man heaved himself out of an armchair in the lounge with a prodigious yawn.

"What sort of an hour is this to come home?" boomed Jack Donohue. "If I'd had to wait for you much longer they were going to start charging me rent."

"You're lucky I got back at all," said the Saint. "I might have been in hospital, or in jail. Weren't you worried?"

"I could have been. They told me you'd had a gorgeous red-head to dinner, and then you'd gone off with her somewhere. But I knew she'd get wise to you fairly soon, and throw you out."

They walked across to Simon's room with a pitcher of ice, and he produced a bottle of Peter Dawson to go with it.

"Well, Jackson," he said. "Besides bumming a free nightcap and insulting me, what's on your mind?"

"Are you going to do that swimming and diving for me on Mon-

day, as you promised you would?"

"Can't you do it yourself?"

"Yes, I could do it, but it would look like hell in the picture. You've read the script. It calls for someone who looks svelte, meaning skinny and underfed, like you. And I've got to know whether I can count on you, tonight. If not, I've got to phone New York and have someone flown down tomorrow."

Simon moved his head reluctantly, left to right.

"I'm sorry, chum. I'm sort of engaged for Monday."

"Give the girl such a time tomorrow that she won't miss you till Tuesday."

"She's tied up tomorrow."

"Then to hell with her. Make her wait for you till Tuesday."

"We have a shooting schedule for Monday, too, and it's something I can't change."

"What a louse you turned out to be," Donohue said morosely. "I should have made an actor of you when I met you in Hollywood. Then you'd have been pleading with me for a chance to work, instead of spurning me for some ginger dye job. Aren't you getting a bit old to be chasing these dizzy dolls?"

The Saint grinned.

"Didn't you know, Junior? When you get to be my age, you'll really appreciate them. And they will appreciate you for your sophistication and all the money you'll have. It's a grand old formula. And talking of formulas—"

He broke off suddenly, his face transfigured in mid-speech by a beatific thought that had illuminated his brain like a revelation from heaven. For several seconds he rolled it rapturously around in his mind, assaying all its possibilities of perfection.

"Well?" Donohue said coldly.

"I'm thinking of your corny script. And I will double in those underwater shots for you."

"Thank you."

"On Tuesday."

"Monday."

"No, I'm booked even more solid on Monday now. Just switch your schedule for the two days. I'm sure you can do it."

"All right, damn you," Donohue said resignedly. "I expect you'll sink like a stone on Tuesday, but all right. If that's all it's costing me, I'll switch the schedule for you."

"It isn't *quite* all . . ."

The director groaned aloud.

"What else? You want real mermaids to fan you between takes?"

"I don't want to strain your budget. But since you don't have to worry about getting a professional swimmer tomorrow, and you'll have nothing but time on your hands, you're going to have to do something for me."

IV

The Narrows on Monday morn-

ing had the air of a maritime picnic ground rather than the site of a salvage operation. The United States Coastguard cutter would have been dwarfed by a destroyer, but she looked big enough to be the mother of the brood of other craft gathered around her. The police boat from Road Town and the pinnace that had brought the Governor of the British islands were tied up to one side of her, and April Mallory's chartered cabin cruiser was tied up to the other side. Duncan Rawl's launch was hove to only a few yards away.

It was a perfect day for a picnic or for salvage. The water was oily calm, silver blue and turquoise, as the sun took its first step up into a cloudless sky; and the variety of flags called for by the nations and services and personages represented gave the little group of boats a festive and holiday appearance.

"I'm only surprised that everything else in the Caribbean that'll float isn't here," said the Saint.

"All of us tried our best to keep it quiet," April said. "That was about the only thing everybody was agreed on, including the authorities. If it had got into the papers, it would have taken the American and British navies combined to keep the channel clear."

The American Governor was on board the cutter, where he was playing host to the British Governor, and he had courteously invited April and the Saint aboard as soon as they came within hailing distance.

It had been nine o'clock the previous night before Simon had talked to her on the phone.

"I had to have dinner with them," she said, "and now I'm full of sun and sleepy, and we've got to leave tomorrow before daylight. Don't let's try to meet tonight."

"Did your legal beagle produce his brainstorm?" he asked.

"No. Did you?"

"Yes."

She was silent for a moment.

"I'm too tired to be teased, darling."

"And I don't want to give you any false hopes, baby. It might work, but it's only a wild wild gamble. So I won't say anything now. Get some sleep, and I'll see you on the dock."

But when they had met, before dawn, and the cabin cruiser droned out through Pillsbury Sound under the paling stars, he still refused to tell her any more.

"Let's face it," he said. "You're prettier than most actresses, but you may not be one. And if you just act naturally, it'll be better than any performance."

"I think I'd rather not know, anyway," she said listlessly. "I've been trying to get used to the idea that I'm licked, and it wouldn't be much fun to start hoping and be let down all over again."

Now, as they stood on the cut-

ter's deck watching Duncan Rawl preparing for his first dive, Simon could feel that she was somewhat less stoical than she might have wished to be, and he was scarcely surprised. He was aware of more than a mild tingle of anticipation himself, although it was necessarily in a different key from hers.

Stripped down to his swimming trunks, Duncan Rawl looked like a heroic if slightly debauched and hungover Norse god. He had declined to board the cutter or to tie up to her, cutting his engine a few lengths away and letting the launch drift by to the separate focal spot befitting the star of the show. He had ignored April and the Saint in his greetings as he passed as if he had not even seen them. He sat with his feet dangling over the side, scowling down at the water, while his helpers hung the air tanks on his shoulders and put a weighted belt around his middle.

The sun was barely high enough to send light under the water when he pulled down his mask, put on the breathing mouthpiece, and let himself down till he sank out of sight.

"I suppose it'd be wicked to hope that a shark bites him," April said.

"Could be," said the Saint. "But let's hope it anyway."

He lighted a cigarette and forced himself to smoke it unhurriedly. In that way, disciplining himself against the temptation to look at his watch every few seconds, he could estimate fairly accurately that it was less than ten minutes before Rawl surfaced again, and his spirits leapt as he saw it.

Rawl's men helped him aboard and lifted off his air tank. There was a brief excited colloquy, and then one of the men took the wheel and the engine coughed and started. Rawl sprang up on to the foredeck as the launch eased over to the cutter, and as it drew alongside he was tall enough to grasp a stanchion on the cutter and hold on, mooring the launch with his own arm.

"Ahoy there, Captain, or whoever's in charge!"

The Coastguard skipper came to the rail, but the two Governors were at his elbow, and April and the Saint were close beside them.

"What is it, Mr. Rawl?"

"You'd better get these boats moved away. I'm going to dynamite."

"Already?" April gasped.

Simon cleared his throat, and moved in still closer.

"Pardon me, your Excellencies," he said to the two Governors, "but Miss Mallory asked me to come as her advisor because her attorney had to be in court this morning. And I think she has a right to protest against what Mr. Rawl proposes to do."

"On what grounds?" asked the British Governor.

"To use dynamite now, before the bottom has been thoroughly

examined as it is, could obliterate a lot of treasure that otherwise might be quite easy to locate and bring up—for someone who really knows what he's doing, I mean. Of course nobody would mind Mr. Rawl making a mess down there if he were the only person concerned. But he should be obliged to leave Miss Mallory a fair chance to find something when her turn comes tomorrow."

"What would you suggest?" asked the American Governor.

"I think it would only be fair to let each party make a thorough search of the bottom, without any blasting, before letting one party change the situation so drastically."

"I'm not dynamiting to see what it uncovers, sir," Rawl said. "I've got to do it to kill something that wouldn't let anyone do any searching."

Simon stared down at him clinically.

"You look rather pale, Duncan, old grampus," he observed. "What was it frightened you down there?"

"Only the biggest damned octopus that anyone here will ever see," snarled Rawl. "It's thirty feet across if it's an inch—and it's sitting right where the treasure is supposed to be!"

The Saint's expression was a masterpiece of derisive disbelief.

"Was it a pink one," he inquired, "wearing a green top-hat and tartan pants, and playing a duet with itself on two piccolos?"

Rawl's face turned dusky under his tan, and his muscles tensed as if he were about to haul himself aboard the cutter by the stanchion he held.

And then a light of hellish inspiration overspread the darkness of rage, and his snarl modulated into a sneer.

"Maybe you'd like to go down and see for yourself," he said.

"I'd love to," Simon said calmly. "Can we take that as an official offer—that since you're scared to go on without blowing that poor little squid to bits, you'll step aside while I try it for April?"

"You're goddam right you can," Rawl said triumphantly. "And I'm going to laugh myself sick watching the great Saint run away from that poor little squid."

April was clinging to the Saint's arm.

"I won't let you," she said.

"You will, honey," he said out of the side of his mouth. "You've got to. It's your only chance."

"Just one more thing, though," Rawl said. "If I let you in ahead of your turn, time's being wasted, and after the Saint comes back with his tail between his legs we'll have to dynamite anyway, and then it'll be hours before the water settles down again so anyone can see anything, so I should have tomorrow to myself as well."

"We'll accept that," Simon said grimly.

The two Governors stepped

aside and conferred together, but not for long.

The American announced their decision: "Since our main object is to eliminate or avoid a dispute, any compromise that Miss Mallory and Mr. Rawl agree upon must have our approval."

V

The Saint sank gently into the cool peacock depths, twisting and turning like a fancy high diver in slow motion to extract the utmost sensual delight from the feeling of three-dimensional freedom which only aqualung swimmers can experience, the nearest thing to the sensation of true flying that man has yet been able to achieve.

The twin cylinders of compressed air on his back, so heavy and cumbersome on a deck, were such a negative burden under water that a belt of small lead weights was necessary to help him sink. Thus counterbalanced, his body felt almost weightless, so that he could turn in any direction or rest relaxed in any position without effort; or if he wished to move anywhere he had only to make lazy movements with his legs, and the rubber flippers on his feet would propel him as smoothly as the fins of a fish.

Breath came to him through the mouthpiece gripped in his teeth, as much and as often as he wanted, so that there was none of the strain and struggle inseparable from ordinary swimming, no irksome reminder that he was in a foreign element. It was a strange rapture which he would discover anew every time he did it: to feel literally almost as much at home in the water as a fish, yet with a buoyant exultation more like the ecstasy of flight that a poet would attribute to a bird.

And like a bird he soared and glided through water almost as crystal clear as air, but more clinging and resistant so that all movements were more languorous, over the hills and valleys, the fantastic groves and gardens, of a strange silent world. Coveys of striped and tinted small fry scattered and circled as he planed through them, and among the submarine trees larger fish moved more sluggishly; and down in the bluer deeps, sprawling torpid and obscene, was the ultimate monster—the finest plastic octopus, Jack Donohue had assured him, that any Hollywood prop department had yet constructed.

The indispensable traditional octopus that had a part in every self-respecting story of sunken treasure since fiction discovered diving.

It was the first time Simon had seen it properly, even though he had helped to place it in its present location. He and Donohue and the prop man had been out there the day before on the tugboat which Donohue was using for his water work, ostensibly to scout scenery and make preparations for the

following week's shooting: the tugboat and Donohue were already known to the Coastguard crew, and were allowed to approach without being warned off as brusquely as any other boat would have been.

Simon and the prop man had dumped the deflated monster over the far side of the tug two hundred yards away and dragged it into position under water, while Donohue took the tug alongside the cutter and engaged the crew in conversation; and the keels of the two boats, which they could look up and see, provided a perfect marker for the position that Simon had to find. But then Simon had had trouble with his air regulator valve, and had had to jettison his weights and swim upwards hastily, leaving the prop man to complete the installation and inflation alone.

He had steered his rise to the side of the tug away from the Coastguard cutter, and climbed aboard where the tug's deckhouse hid him, and soon afterwards the prop man had done the same, and then Donohue had promptly headed the tug away down the channel before they would seem to be dawdling too long in the forbidden area.

It had all worked out as slickly as a drill; and even the prop man had only been told that Donohue was determined to shoot some underwater scenes in that particular spot in spite of the prohibition.

Now that Simon saw the monster (which in their irreverent way the movie unit had christened Marilyn) in its full glory, he was ready to agree that it was a real work of art. Some of its tentacles which were not anchored to the rock, stirred no doubt by unseen tidal currents, moved sinuously like huge slothful snakes, and their undulating motion transmitted an effect of ponderously pulsing life to the bloated purple body and the malignant liquid eyes. He couldn't despise Rawl for being scared. If he hadn't known what it was, he wouldn't have gone anywhere near it himself.

But it had worked, psychologically and with shrewd needling, exactly as the Saint had banked on it.

Now all he had to do was pick up the gold and load it into the cradle which had been lowered from April's cruiser.

It seemed almost absurdly anticlimactic, but that was about all there was to it.

It was the kind of sunken treasure that salvage men dream about. The *Santa Cecilia* had gone down in a rocky basin which kept her remains together as if in a bowl. There were no shifting sands, the bane of most treasure hunts, to scatter and swallow them. Everything that had not perished was within a small radius; and he had located the area without too much trouble, as April had said he would, by the

suggested shapes of such recognizables as cannon and cannon balls. It was only a matter of chipping the crusts of coral at every likely-looking spot, working with hammer and crowbar whenever he was rewarded with a yellow gleam, breaking the gold bars loose and dragging them to the cradle and putting them in . . .

In only half an hour he had collected as big a load as he figured the light tackle on the cruiser could comfortably handle.

He signaled on the rope for it to be hauled up, and paddled off to investigate another promising coral formation still closer to the shelf on which Marilyn sat eyeing him balefully. Under the concealing growth of living stone, he found another mound of ingots.

He wished he could have been on the cruiser's deck, as well as down there, to share April's excitement when she saw the first load.

He started to smile, almost getting himself a mouthful of water. The excitement on the surface would not be confined to April's cruiser. It would spread in a flash to every other boat in the group—including Rawl's. Somewhat belatedly, he wondered what would happen after that.

He had told April the truth about Marilyn, of course, before he started down, in a brief moment when he had her alone. But he hadn't had time to emphasize that the secret must always be kept between them. He hoped that in her intoxication with the last-minute victory she wouldn't let something out that would reach the ears of Rawl. It would be ironic to have victory snatched from them again on a technicality. But if Rawl cried foul, the Governors might have to sustain him. Or would Rawl prefer to accept defeat rather than ridicule?

Simon had a partial answer about April in a few minutes. She came down in the empty cradle, wearing her own aqualung, like a modern mermaid in a hammock. She could not smile, with the rubber mouthpiece deforming her lips, but as he touched her and they shook hands he saw her eyes shining and dancing behind the glass of her face mask.

Then she saw the octopus, and her eyes grew still bigger. Simon got her attention back by shaking her shoulder. The instant she looked at him he pointed at the octopus, then up towards the surface, then put an upraised forefinger in front of his mouthpiece. She nodded vigorously, and repeated the forefinger gesture, and he figured that everything was still all right.

But he looked up again, and saw Duncan Rawl coming down.

There was no mistaking the glint of sunlight on his yellow curls. Or the glint of metal from the powerful spear gun couched under his arm like a lance.

The Saint's thoughts raced in a vertiginous cascade. Had Rawl

gone completely crazy with disappointment, berserk, decided to murder one or both of them regardless of the almost inevitable consequences? It seemed incredible to the Saint even as he instinctively thrust April behind him and poised himself for the flimsy chance of parrying the spear with his crowbar. Rawl was swimming down at a steep angle toward them, but on a course which began to look as if it would take him down on to Marilyn unless he pulled out of the dive at the last moment. Then was he playing for some kind of compensating glory?

Since the Saint had made him look foolish by ignoring the octopus and having no trouble, was Rawl thinking of vindicating himself by killing it and then claiming to have saved the Saint's life? That was plausible, yet it seemed hardly enough. A boast like that hardly seemed enough to salve a hypertrophied ego that had taken such punctures as he had administered to Rawl's.

And then the answer dawned on him, with the clarity of a blueprint, as Rawl slowed his glide directly over the giant cephalopod. It was written like a book in the way Rawl glanced towards him for an instant, running his eye like a tape measure over the distance between Simon and the octopus.

Rawl only expected his shaft, when he fired it, to infuriate the creature. Then it would grab Simon and April, who were well within its reach. And Duncan Rawl would take credit for having valiantly tried to save them . . .

The Saint's ribs ached from the impossibility of laughing.

Duncan Rawl fired his spear.

It twinkled like a silver arrow, straight down at Marilyn's great amorphous body. And then the thing happened that curdled and froze the laughter in Simon Templar's chest.

As if the monster had watched everything with its basilisk eye, and hadn't been fooled for a second, knowing exactly where the thing that stung it had come from *—but how preposterous and fantastic could anything be?—*it released the rock it sprawled on and shot straight upwards like an outlandish rocket. Its tentacles lashed around Rawl like enormous whips, and where they touched they clung. He looked like a pygmy in its stupendous eight-armed grip. One of the arms coiled around his head, then writhed away again, taking with it his mask and breathing hose. The Saint and April had one last dreadful glimpse of his face, before the final horror was blotted out in a tremendous cloud of ink.

VI

"It's a good thing I only want you to do some swimming, and not as a technical expert," Jack Donohue said caustically, "if you

can't tell a real octopus from a prop."

"I thought it looked extraordinarily lifelike," said the Saint. "But I've heard they can do anything in Hollywood. I should be more careful what publicity I read."

They sat out on the terrace of Bluebeard's Castle again, watching the lights kindle below them as the brief twilight deepened over the town. April was with them, but she was not talking much.

"You're lucky I don't have to send you a bill that'd keep you broke for three years," Donohue said. "Some fishermen found Marilyn drifting around Cruz Bay."

"The only way I can figure it, the real one must have had an unsatisfactory tussle with her," Simon said, "whether he saw her as an unwilling sweetheart or a rival male. Anyway, before he found out she was only a prop, he'd torn her loose from her moorings, and she floated away. The real octopus liked the look of the spot and decided to settle down there himself."

"And why he didn't grab you for breakfast as soon as you came within reach, I'll never know."

"Maybe he'd just had a good breakfast and wasn't hungry. Didn't you ever go fishing and wonder why sometimes they'll bite anything and other times they seem to be on a hunger strike? Of course when Rawl shot a spear into it, that was different. Even an octopus must have its pride."

"And it was a break for you that it was smart enough to know who shot at it."

"It's too bad your camera crew wasn't there. It was a better scene than you'll ever direct."

April shuddered.

"Please don't," she said. "I know he meant it to kill us, but I'll have nightmares every time I remember that thing wooshing up at him. I never knew they could move so fast, and his face . . ."

"Don't let that Saint name fool you," Donohue said. "He's a ghoul. No, I take that back. He's a thing ghouls won't speak to."

"He is not!" she said indignantly. "As soon as he'd got me up to the boat, he went back to see if he couldn't do anything, even though all he had was a knife. But he couldn't see anything."

"All right," Donohue said. "He's a hero. But don't forget to count those gold bars every time he goes near them."

"He can have anything he wants," April said.

Jack Donohue stood up.

"I'm expecting a call from the studio, and I've got to work on the script tonight," he said. "But before I ruin your evening by leaving you, would someone tell me why the Saint always ends up with a billion dollars and the most beautiful girl in sight?"

"Doesn't that go with every old treasure story?" said the Saint.

the café sinister

by . . . Ben Hecht

He had a front seat to what was surely the greatest show on earth, a murderer's blueprint for death.

ALWAYS IN A CAFE of elegance where the elite come to advertise their boredom I feel the promise of sinister events. My years as a newspaperman still make me think of the fashionable and the famous in terms of derogatory headlines. I never enter one of these hothouse roosts without feeling immediately that around me are the important scandals of tomorrow.

Here they sit—in the ornate anteroom of suicide, bankruptcy and blackmail, aglitter with the spoils of life, including that last most dangerous treasure: ennui. You would never fancy that these toyfaced heroes and heroines of the city's night were anything but what they seem—a group of beribboned insomnia victims come to stare at one another and exchange yawns. But this is a deception. For in these moribund huddles sit beauty, talent and wealth. And, however bored they seem, you may be sure that where such sit, there is always devil's music playing near by.

I have a friend, Dr. Mortimer Briggs, who is a Haroun-al-

The prodigality of imagination and zest for psychological exploration which have carved out for Ben Hecht such a resplendent niche in the rostrum of contemporary literary fame was never better exemplified than in this brilliantly fanciful yarn with its hard core of realism. It is a rare privilege indeed to bring you the work of so accomplished a story teller.

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Raschid sort of psychiatrist. He is given to wandering the city after midnight and peering into its psychoses and, perhaps, looking for customers.

This soul gazer assures me that his favorite haunt, El Granada Café, is the most clinical spot in town, and I have taken to haunting it with him. My interest is chiefly Morty, who is a witty and instructive companion and who has the gift of making the dullest people blossom into werewolves and moon monsters—a side of psychiatry that has always pleased me.

In El Granada after midnight, says Morty, assemble the demon-driven of the town—the rich, the brilliant and the beautiful. The rich, he tells me, have warped souls—all of them—as a result of exercising their egos rather than their wits.

As for their playfellows—the men and women of the arts—these are in an even worse situation. For only successful geniuses can afford to bask in El Granada, and medically, says Morty, there is nothing as troublesome to genius as success. It substitutes press notices for dreams and cocktail parties for the pursuit of beauty. Fame, holds Morty, is a sort of mummy case in which the creative talents of yesterday lie in state and glitter with mania.

As for beauty, my friend's theory is that all the lovely ladies who bloom nightly in El Granada are more phantom than female. They are, he says, shallow and dangerous. They are designed, like mirages, only to stir hunger and arouse the imagination, and they have no food to offer either.

In the months we have been squatting almost nightly in El Granada, that ornamental cauldron has yielded the press four suicides, one murder, fifteen divorces and innumerable lesser items involving bigamy, treason and embezzlement. None of these events actually happened in El Granada, but its violent actors were all recruited from its yawning tables.

It was while sitting with Doctor Morty in this Pandora's box of a café one night that I witnessed the debut of the Baron Corfus, and with it the opening scene of a drama as fantastic as any in the Arabian Nights, and one that fulfilled in abundance its promise of sinister events.

There was no hint of macabre enterprise about the tall, pottery-faced gentleman who made his first entrance that night. It was midnight—an hour at which El Granada is so crowded with men and women of distinction that it is practically impossible for anyone to achieve the slightest attention.

The arrival of an elegant-looking elderly man wearing a camellia in his lapel and accompanied by a beautiful girl in camellia-studded furs is a matter of no more import

to El Granada at midnight than the squeezing of two more shoppers into a subway train during the rush hour. The fact that Ganzo, the headwaiter, himself conducted the pair to a reserved table was no clue to the importance of the newcomers. It indicated that a twenty-dollar bill had changed hands.

Thus it was that the Baron Corfus and his companion created no ripples with their entrance. I remember well, however, that Morty was quick to bag the newcomer.

"Never saw him before," he said, "and the girl is new, too."

"Not bad looking," I said. You have to be modest in your opinions in front of Morty or he explodes. Psychiatry is basically the science of contradiction.

"Strip her, scrub her face and comb her hair out," said Morty, "and you have a slight case of pituitary emaciation plus a bit of narcissism."

"She still looks like Salome to me," I said. "Do you think that red hair is real?"

"The hair is real," the great scientist admitted grudgingly, "but the eyes are of glass. The man is vastly more interesting."

"He looks well preserved," I said.

"To the contrary," said Morty happily, "he is in the last stages of disintegration. A well-dressed case of cachexia always looks like a visiting diplomat."

Morty mopped his face with one of his many handkerchiefs. Though not a fat man—as psychiatrists go—he was in a constant perspiration, and regardless of the temperature, seemed always either to be choking to death or about to be laid low by the heat. He performed this mopping operation with quick and furtive gestures as if he expected nobody to notice the oddity.

"Besides," he went on, "that man has too much poise unless it's arteriosclerosis." Morty changed handkerchiefs. "A very curious fellow—that fellow."

I shall describe the new arrival as I saw him this first time. He was a man so embedded in an attitude that his age seemed a mystery. The attitude was one of charm and aloofness. The gray face with its long jaws, its thin lips, its enameled gloss was raised as if it were in the midst of some performance. He had metallic-gray hair that was curled tightly on his skull and seemed to have been polished rather than combed.

But the man's eyes were his chief attraction. They were almost tight shut. The eyelids were lowered as if against a glare and the eyes were reduced to two glittering lines—like the dashes in a code.

"I'd say he was almost blind," Morty went on slowly, "and the squint is a ruse for increasing his small vision. Or else—"

"Or else, what?" I asked humbly.

"Or else," said Morty, "he's as mad as a hatter. A man closes his eyes like that for one reason, usually. He doesn't want to be seen. I call them ostrichomaniacs." Morty considered this a joke.

"That's a queer theory about a gentleman who seeks out a spotlight like El Granada," I said.

"It's his soul, not his camellia that's in hiding," Morty answered.

The music resumed. El Granada was filling up for the night, which meant that the fashionable and the famous were being reduced to sardinelike postures that made drinking, talking or eating wellnigh impossible. Dancers inched about on the small floor. The service grew panicky, breathing difficult.

Baron Corfus had added himself to this ensemble as if it were his natural element. At one-thirty the newcomer rose to leave. Morty and I automatically called it a night. Together with some twenty other frolickers bored to a point of nervous collapse, we squeezed our way out of El Granada.

I wondered idly as we stepped into the life-restoring street who the elderly glassy-faced dandy in front of us was, and what type of insomnia had brought him to our roost.

An automobile drew up to the curb. The baron handed Ivan, the doorman, a five-dollar bill for his single bow and entered the car with his lovely redhead.

"A very strange fellow," said Morty. "I hope we see more of him."

We did. In the weeks that followed, El Granada had produced a new diversion for us—a mystery man.

Mystery is not a thing that happens quickly. It is the negative side of events, the blank curtain concealing drama. You must look at this curtain a long time before even becoming aware that it is hanging in front of you. Having located it, however, you have a front seat at the greatest show on earth—the Unknown.

The Baron Corfus—headwaiter Ganzo had supplied his name—became our show—more Morty's than mine. For while I was content to enjoy knowing nothing and imagining everything, like any good mystery fan, Morty was busy with solutions.

The trail, said Morty, after several weeks of studying furtively our camellis-tipped dandy, offered several scents. For one thing, the unvarying departure at exactly one-thirty A. M. was the sort of ceremonial behavior, said Morty, that revealed mania. Since my friend managed to discover lunacy in practically everybody who came under his scientific eye, I was not too impressed.

"The difference in this case," said Morty, "is that here we have lunacy in action. We are all luna-

tics, but inert ones. Psychic duds, so to speak. But the baron's mania is up to something. It's performing for us. It's plotting away every night."

"Plotting what?" I asked modestly.

"That, I don't know," beamed my Sherlock, "but I will soon. All we know now is that the baron arrives here with ceremonial regularity on the stroke of midnight with a beautiful young lady in whom he has no interest, and we have also the fact that our baron, a tireless exhibitionist nevertheless refuses to commune with any of the customers here."

We had both observed that our mystery man had frozen off a dozen neighborly attempts at conversation. I attributed this to jealousy of his companion.

"Nonsense," Morty answered. "Definitely the baron is not jealous. He's just busy and doesn't care to be interrupted."

"Busy doing what?" I asked humbly.

"Hiding," said Morty, "and plotting."

It was I who first noticed a few evenings later that the baron had a different young woman with him. His new friend—in addition to wearing the same camellia-studded furs, the same fingernails, and the same fixed glow of an enchanted window dummy—was also a redhead.

"Well, we've got a new clue," I said. "We've found out that the baron has a clear redhead fetish."

"A putrid deduction," said Morty. "A man who keeps his eyes shut isn't going in for color fetishes. The redhead is a coincidence. Or perhaps a drug on the market." But I could see that Morty was not too impressed by this notion.

A young naval lieutenant squeezed into a chair at our table. This was Dickie Malchen, one of our night-life alumni who had wheedled his way into the land-locked sector of the Navy.

"Hiya," said Dickie. "I'm on leave again. First free breath in five weeks. Ever been in Washington in the summer?" The young mariner shuddered. "There's nothing worse on earth than that Navy building."

"War is war," I offered.

I had never liked Dickie Malchen. He was of the tribe of rich young men who go in for a career of billboard love affairs. El Granada has a large complement of these Romeos who, lacking all other enterprise, devote themselves to the pursuit of ladies.

The pursuit seldom goes beyond a jog trot, but even at this pace the night-club Isoldes are easily lassoed. The goal of both sexes being identical—to achieve mention in the gossip columns as often as possible—little time is wasted outside the limelight.

"The old hunting grounds," our lieutenant said sentimentally,

turning a flaccid face on the clientele.

"How do they look after the terrors of Washington?" I asked.

Dickie always appreciated minor insults. "Better than ever," he laughed, still sweeping the horizon with expert eye. His attention came to a halt.

"At least," he went on, "I know now what I'm fighting for."

"And what's that?" I asked.

"That redhead," said Dickie softly. "Holy hat! That's an item! Who is that well-groomed graveyard with her?"

I gave the baron's name.

"Never heard of him," said Dickie.

"Ever seen the girl?" I asked.

Dickie sipped his drink and was thoughtful. One had the impression of a young man peering into a myriad of hotel rooms.

"Uh-uh," he said moodily, "but it's my dish. I think I'll go over and cheer the poor little thing up. I never could stand to see redheads wasted."

"You won't get very far," I said. "The baron is a seclusive type. He shuns people."

"My dish," Dickie repeated softly and stood up. "Watch me. The Navy never misses."

We watched and were astonished. Lieutenant Malchen stood in front of the baron's table smiling and speaking easily. The baron arose, smiled and bowed. Whereupon the beautiful redhead stepped from behind the table and in a twinkling our lieutenant and the baron's prize were on the dance floor locked in a sort of *rigor mortis*.

I watched Dickie and noted that he had not lost his cunning as a ballroom artist. He still favored the strangle hold for waltzes and the bear hug for all other rhythms.

Morty nudged me. "That bears it out," he said.

"Bears what out, oracle?" I asked.

"My first diagnosis—that the baron doesn't give a hoot about redheads." Morty mopped his brow. "He hasn't opened his eyes, turned his head or stolen a single peek at the blitzkrieg on the dance floor."

Twenty minutes later, Dickie returned the rumpled beauty to her perch beside the baron and sat down next to her. There was a small group of tax-tortured citizens at our own table discussing the future of the world. This vital topic however, failed to hold my attention. I waited for the Navy to bring us tidings of Baron Corfus. And while waiting, I noted with some surprise that our Don Juan apparently had lost interest in his red-headed quarry. Both he and the "dish" sat unaware of each other, listening open mouthed to the baron.

At 1:35 Dickie returned from the vestibule and joined us. The tax-debating society had moved on to another club for inspiration, and Morty and I were alone.

"Holy hat!" said Dickie. "What a guy! The most exciting old pollywog I ever listened to."

"How'd you get in?" I asked.

"Oh, that," Dickie grinned. "Just pulled the old gag. Introduced myself and told the old boy I'd made a fifty-dollar bet with you gentlemen that I could prevail on him to let me dance with the lovely young lady at his side. It worked like a charm. The thing that helped was that the old boy knows you and doesn't like you. Uh-uh—not for apples."

"Knows whom?" I asked.

"The doctor," said Dickie. Morty beamed. "He hates psychiatry," Dickie went on, "if that's of any interest to you?"

"Of the deepest," said Morty.

"What did he talk about?" I asked as Dickie sunk his nose into a wineglass.

"Terrific!" he looked up. "He knew all of the Nazi big shots—Goebbels, Goering, Hitler. He'd been to their homes. I never heard anything so fascinating."

Here at least was an answer to the baron's fascination for the two redheads. Our mystery man was full of intimate tidbits concerning the home life of Germany's one-time bogeymen.

"Holy hat!" Dickie jumped up suddenly. "I forgot to get her telephone number. I'm slipping."

"Sit down. She'll be back tomorrow night," I promised. "What did she have to say about his nibs while you were dancing?"

"Not a talking type," said Dickie with a soulful look toward the vestibule, "but quite a dish, eh?"

"Well," said Morty, after Dickie left us, "we've found out one impressive clue. The baron knows who I am and dislikes me. I think that's vital information."

"For your press book, perhaps," I said. "Personally, I am more interested in his having been so close to the great Nazis."

"Lies, all lies," said Morty. "He never knew any Nazis. He never met Goebbels or Hitler. He's merely taking advantage of the ingénue American interest in backstairs tittle-tattle to put something over. His dislike of me proves that absolutely."

"You're sending up bubbles," I said. "I don't follow you."

"My dear friend," Morty beamed, "the man's up to something and he's terrified I'll see through him. All lunatics feel that way about me."

Morty let his face drip in exultation. "They're telepathic," he went on. "They can sense a brain piercing through their hocus-pocus. That's what ails the baron. He knows I've got his compulsion neurosis by the tail and that I'm likely to see where it's going—any minute."

Highly pleased with himself, the moist thinker forgot it was his turn as guest at our table and picked up the check.

Thus our mystery remained for

a week. The only progress made was by Dickie Malchen, whose relationship with the redhead had already borne fruit in the gossip columns.

I had hoped the lieutenant would play go-between and get us a bid backstage of our mystery. Nothing of the sort happened. The only news that Dickie brought us of the baron was of his remarkable collection of paintings and of his aversion for Morty.

"I suggested we all get together," said Dickie, "but he can't stand psychiatrists. You ain't mad, are you, Doc?" and Dickie winked at me.

"Not in the least." Morty also winked at me. "Nobody loves a nosey psychiatrist."

Dickie chortled and squeezed off toward the dance floor.

It was the next night that the curtain at which we had been staring so long began finally to rise. It did not rise far, but enough to give us our first glimpse of the design of the hidden stage. The design was Uncle Albert Malchen, Dickie's most renowned relative.

The honorable and disintegrating Albert was rarely seen in such gaudy dens as El Granada. He belonged to an era that had come to a full stop with the diabolic invention of the income tax; an era, also, that had regarded sin as a very important matter worthy of secret mansions, secret yachts and posthumous autobiographies.

Uncle Albert, having squandered millions on amour, was averse surely to seeing it knocked down nightly in the open market for a single magnum of champagne, which may have accounted, in part, for his absence from such haunts as ours.

His appearance on this night sent a ripple through the blaring room, for Mr. Malchen was more than a celebrity come to be seen holding hands with another celebrity. He was a legend stepped out of ancient Wall Street deals and international love scandals—a gentleman as archaic as the Devil in red tights—and the fleshpots curtsied nostalgically to him.

Beholding him, the clientele of El Granada remembered tales of chateaus on beaches, mountaintops and boulevards, recalled Rembrandts and Raphaels showered on strumpets, wheat markets cornered, and somebody shooting somebody else on the opening night of the Opera.

The lieutenant piloted this white-mustached, red-faced legend through the crowded room. He held it tenderly by the elbow, and a look of extreme piety was on him as if he were guiding an abbot to his prayers. The two, uncle and nephew, stopped in front of the table of our camellia-studded baron. Introductions took place and chairs were adjusted.

"Well, my friend," Morty scowled. "At least the first part of the mystery is cleared up. We can dismiss the Titians sirens

from here in." He mopped his face.

"We're a pair of idiots," he resumed. "Good Lord, imagine my not seeing through the whole thing in a minute. It makes me sick."

"But you did see through it," I comforted the scientist.

"Only as far as Dickie," Morty frowned. "I saw that the redheads were a bait set out for our naval hero. And I saw that the baron had gone to considerable research, for a foreigner, to establish the fact that Dickie had a fetish for red-haired ladies. But I didn't think beyond Dickie to Uncle Albert."

"You're quite right," I said. "It looks pretty obvious. Our baron snagged Dickie with a redhead. And then used Dickie as bait for Uncle Albert. And Uncle Albert is now going to be taken for something neat and considerable."

The baron and Mr. Malchen were conversing amiably against the padded satin wall. Mr. Malchen's red, rubbery face was full of a sort of roguish good humor of the old school. He appeared to be urging something on the baron and the baron with much charm appeared to be refusing whatever it was.

"One thing confuses me," Morty spoke up suddenly. "There doesn't seem anything mad about the whole business. And there should be. There should be something very definitely maniacal going on. And there isn't. It's all too stupidly logical."

Morty glared at our baron as at a mendacious patient. "We are being misled," he sighed. "If that man's a swindler, I'm a chiropodist." And Morty sat glaring at the baron indignantly.

Our mystery was being seated when we reached our El Granada roost the next night.

"I wonder what the next step is," I said as Ganzo with tip-dizzied tenderness guided the baron and the redhead to the padded wall.

"The next step involves us," said Morty in a whisper," the fellow is beaming at us like a brother Elk."

I turned and saw this remarkable sight. Baron Corfus was smiling unmistakably in our direction, and Ganzo was moving toward our table.

"The gentleman over there," said Ganzo, "Baron Corfus, asks if you care to join him as his guests."

"We'd be delighted," said Morty softly.

Ganzo bowed and smiled like a good fairy whose work is done.

We squeezed our way to the baron's side.

His voice fitted him like another camellia. It was softly accented and full of good humor—the voice of a man of wit who has learned English where it is spoken only by the most elegant of people.

"I feel we are old friends," he said after the introductions to the red-haired Miss Annabella Wilkerson were done and we had all sat down. "Your faces have the quality of long companionship. I am certain that mine must be equally familiar to you."

This was not bad as a dig at our weeks of scrutiny.

"Yes," said Morty. "We've been interested in each other for some time. In fact, my friend and I have been happily mystified since your first appearance."

I thought this a little crude but the baron was delighted.

"I didn't know psychiatrists were ever mystified," he said. "I thought people were an open book to them—a rather ugly book."

"Open," said Morty kitttenishly, "but hard to read halfway across a room."

The baron nodded and failed to look wary. His eyes continued to glitter through their slits with a sort of gaiety that confused me. But not Morty. Morty apparently understood this symptom thoroughly. He seemed, in fact, full of a friskiness that matched the baron's, and I was reminded of two fighters who squared off with grins on their mugs, each equally certain of himself.

We ordered wine, and I tackled the red-haired Miss Wilkerson with a few opening remarks about Dickie.

"Oh, really now," Miss Wilkerson answered in a swooning Southern voice. "All Navy men are alike, don't you think? Ah don' mean anything disrespeckful tawed the Navy, but they ah so Navy, wouldn't you say?"

The baron smiled at her without mockery. "I find this place very interesting," he resumed, "and also a little sad."

"Why sad?" I asked and earned a mysterious kick under the table from Morty.

"It is sad when you see how little riches have come to mean," said the baron. "And how small a thing luxury has become. Hardly more than this." He nodded wistfully at El Granada and continued, "Luxury was once the goal of all intelligent human beings. Now we are all a little ashamed of it and actually frightened of its fine clothes and pleasant hours. It's a pity that the dream of luxury has been frightened out of the world."

"It will not be luxury that's removed from the world." Morty mopped his face and kept peeking like a schoolboy from behind his handkerchief. "But only its present formula—a great deal for a very few. This is being altered into another formula—a little for everybody."

"I wonder," said the baron, "if useless things can be rationed or idleness evenly distributed. It is doubtful."

"Why did you ask us over?" Morty asked suddenly, and I was glad to see that the boys had come to an end of their sparring.

"The scientist is always direct," the baron smiled. "Here is our wine. Shall we drink first?"

The lovely Miss Wilkerson cooed over the bubbles. "Ah just adaw champagne," she said. "It relaxes yaw mind. It really does."

The baron raised his glass to her. "To you," he said, "for being so beautiful."

"Thank you." Miss Wilkerson widened her eyes at all of us.

Our host said, smiling at Morty, "I asked you over because your deep interest in me made me think you might enjoy the only small gift I have to offer—that of the *raconteur.*"

"I knew that," said Morty smugly. "I knew you had something to tell us."

A waiter appeared bearing a telephone instrument which he plugged in.

"We have your number now," the waiter said.

"Excuse me." The baron smiled at us and spoke into the instrument. "Hello. Is that Emil? Emil, this is Corfus. Do you remember what time I told you I expected the gentlemen: . . . Ah . . . They are? . . . Please, I will speak to the lieutenant."

The baron sighed and looked at Morty. "I have done a very stupid thing," he said. "I thought my appointment was for one-thirty rather than midnight. Isn't that what I told you, Miss Wilkerson?"

"Yes." She nodded earnestly. "Ah understood it was one-thirty. Ah remember very distinctly . . ."

"I'm afraid we are wrong," he smiled. "You must explain to me, Doctor, how it is that one's memory can be so accurate, so vivid and accurate about the past and so completely worthless on matters of the present."

"Perhaps the present is of no interest to you," Morty cooed.

I knew he had spotted the shaking of the baron's hand and the tension in the slitted eyes.

"Hello," our host spoke into the phone. "Lieutenant? . . . Oh, I'm so very sorry, Lieutenant. I had an impression that we were to meet after the café . . . Oh, really? . . . Yes, I recall now. In fact, I've been uncertain for fifteen minutes. Please convey to your uncle my deepest regrets and ask him if he will be kind enough to look at the paintings. I will be over very soon. Tell him the data is on my desk. . . . Oh, he is? I am delighted."

The baron's breath caught in a curious gasp and the shaking of the hand holding the instrument increased.

"Then there is no need for me to rush," he resumed. "And how are you, Lieutenant? We missed you this evening—in more ways than one. Yes, she is here. Would you care to speak to her?"

He handed the phone to Miss Wilkerson. Morty mopped away and peeked excitedly, and I wondered if he would offer his handkerchief to the baron, on

whose temples a film of moisture had appeared.

"Hello tha," said Miss Wilkerson. "So sorry yaw not heah, Mr. Malchen . . . Yes, tha's a wonderful crowd heah tonight . . . Oh, just everybody . . . You do? . . . Oh, that's very naughty, Mr. Malchen . . . No, I won't call you Dickie ever if you talk like tha."

She laughed, as Dickie apparently stepped up his campaign and tossed back a series of arch and ambiguous gurgles. The baron sat listening with what seemed a breathless, dreamy air. A smile twitched his mouth and he took the instrument from Miss Wilkerson.

"Will you please ask the butler to fix you a drink, until I get there?" he said. "Oh, it's no trouble at all for him. And I'm sure he has some sandwiches ready . . . He did? Well, I'm delighted . . . No, no, no . . . Please, say nothing about that till I get there. And give him all the time he wants. A great art connoisseur loves to be alone with his quarry . . . and I'm sure he'll find the paintings quite worth his attention . . . Yes . . . We'll finish our drinks and be over . . . And my apologies for forgetting the hour."

He hung the phone up and looked at his wrist watch. The moisture had spread from his temples to his chin and glistened now on his shaking fingers. His voice, however, was smooth enough as he said, "Mr. Albert Malchen is at my apartment looking at some paintings I own and am not averse to selling."

Morty stared at him blandly.

"It really upset me." The baron removed his own handkerchief and mopped his face. "I cannot bear to be unpunctual. Punctuality is perhaps my defense against a completely disorganized mind. At least, I often think so. But no harm's been done. Shall we have another bottle of wine?"

"Ah don't think we ought to leave Mr. Malchen alone," Miss Wilkerson pouted.

"But I cannot desert our new friends here so abruptly." He smiled. "Particularly Dr. Briggs who is still curious as to why I sought the honor of his company. I am an exile from a country that I once loved. There is nothing pleases me so much as to tell stories about that country. It is the same as one feels toward an old, old friend who has died. One loves to recall him and speak of him to others."

I had an impression the baron was babbling and I waited for Morty to say as much. But Morty had grown dreamy and I knew his mind was far away from the baron's words. He was thinking like a steam engine.

Baron Corfus spoke for another five minutes. He was describing a dinner party at which Mussolini had recited an ode to himself,

when the waiter appeared, bearing a telephone.

"For you, sir." He nodded at the baron, as he plugged in the wire.

"Hello," the baron spoke into the phone. "Yes . . . What? . . . I don't understand . . . Oh, I see . . . Oh, I'm terribly sorry . . . Yes, I have one in my pocket . . . Yes . . . Oh, I'm sure nothing has happened . . . Yes, indeed, I'll be right over."

He hung up quickly and rose.

Morty followed him to his feet. "Has something happened?" he purred.

"You look awfully upset?" Miss Wilkerson put her hand on the baron's arm. "Is it something about Dickie?"

"I'm sure it's nothing," our host sighed, starting toward the vestibule. Morty was at his side and the baron added, "Mr. Malchen says his uncle locked himself in my drawing room. The door has a spring lock and I have the only key."

"Why doesn't Uncle Albert open it?" Morty asked softly.

"Apparently he is so enthralled by my paintings," the baron smiled, "that he can not hear his nephew's outcries."

"I am a doctor," said Morty, "and will go home with you. In case one is needed."

The baron's apartment was five minutes away by taxi. The four of us rode there in silence.

The butler who opened the Corfus door for us looked like Voltaire—a puny and electric old gentleman. Dickie gathered Miss Wilkerson to him and begged her not to worry because he had already sent for Dr. Kenneth O. Bishop, the heart specialist, and his uncle's chief personal physician.

Miss Wilkerson patted the mariner's cheek and was certain everything would be all right.

In the meantime Corfus unlocked the door, at which we were all looking. We saw a large softly lighted room with a number of paintings on the walls. At the far end of the room stood an easel with a large painting of a woman on it. The easel was an imposing affair with velvet drapes on each side.

A third look revealed Albert Malchen on the floor, his face flattened against the rug. The fabled Malchen was dead. In this room hung with too many paintings, he looked like a child collapsed amid his toys.

We stood like a little group of mummers who had not learned their lines for the death scene. Particularly Morty. Morty had turned his gaze away from the mighty Malchen crumpled on the rug. He was looking at another figure—the one on the easel. It was a full-length portrait of a woman of twenty. She was a proud and fragile lady done chiefly in greens . . .

Dr. Kenneth O. Bishop found

us with highball glasses in our hands. He was tall, learned and expensive-looking and obviously of the supreme court of medicine. It was apparent at once that dead millionaires were no novelty to him. Mr. Malchen's death held no surprise. Dr. Bishop had been treating the financier for a bad heart for a number of years, he said.

Dickie, removing his arm from the Wilkerson rib cage, explained the events preceding the demise. He had accompanied his uncle into the room, and they had just started looking about when Baron Corfus had telephoned. Dickie had followed the butler to the phone, which was in another room, and asked the old fellow to mix him a drink.

The butler had prepared the drink while Dickie talked over the phone. Then he had sat drinking and giving the butler his favorite recipe for mint juleps. Going back to join his uncle, he had found the door locked. Mr. Malchen had closed the door himself, Dukie imagined, because he wanted to look at the paintings without interruption.

Morty who had been listening blandly, added the question: "Were the drapes on the easel painting open or closed when you left the room to answer the phone?"

"They were closed," said Dickie, frowning.

Morty nodded agreeably.

The more expensive-looking scientist then made a curious statement. Some seven years ago Albert Malchen had specified that he should not be buried without an autopsy. This was a request not uncommon among his extremely wealthy patients, who were evidently haunted by a fear of foul play. Of course, this phobia did not mean anything, but he would let Dr. Briggs know any interesting findings, he added, graciously favoring the gleam in Morty's eye.

He paused and sighed. "Mr. Malchen was a very dear friend. It's obvious that he became overexcited by these paintings, particularly the one on the easel."

"It is a beautiful thing," said Corfus.

"Well, it was too much for him," said Dr. Bishop. "Poor Albert, he always loved art above everything else in the world."

"A wonderful theory . . ." Morty whispered in my ear sarcastically. "That painting never excited anybody—except me."

I saw the baron nod to the old butler as we started leaving the room. Voltaire remained behind and slowly drew together the drapes.

Morty telephoned me the next afternoon. I asked him if he had seen the baron.

"No," he said, "but don't worry about him. We'll see him tonight at El Granada."

"You think he'll be there?" I asked.

"You *are* a babe in the woods," Morty chuckled. "He'll not only be there but he'll be alone."

I asked my Sherlock how he deduced that.

"Because he's expecting me," said Morty. "I hold a great fascination for him. Much greater than he ever held for me."

I assured Morty that I was completely baffled by the whole thing and asked about the autopsy.

"Mr. Malchen died of a bad heart," Morty said happily. "No contributing factors in the way of bullets, poisons or blows were found. It was a perfect crime. Twelve o'clock—and don't be late. I don't want to keep the baron in suspense."

Baron Corfus was there, and alone, poised as a bit of old statuary. Obviously, he was waiting for us.

I have always admired dandyism in distress—Charles of England removing the long curls from his neck and murmuring that there was no occasion for the ax man to disturb them since they had offended no one; the literary prince of Paris listening to the pompous death warrant being read to him and interrupting wearily: "Tut-tut . . . the style of Diderot;" and that Brooklyn boy swimming through the oil-flaming Coral Sea and calling out to the rescue boat, "Hey buddy, here's a couple of hitchhikers."

The temperament that yields no whit of its style to calamity has always been my favorite, and on this night our baron was an accomplished member of its tribe. For if ever calamity signaled its presence, and nemesis bayed in the offing, it was Morty. He squinted at our host as if he were sighting a rifle on him, he perspired, leered and fidgeted like a June bride, and he gulped down glasses of wine.

But his gloat was that of the pedagogue in pursuit of truth rather than the Puritan laying evil by the heels, and I forgave him. It pleased me to know, however, that our baron would sit unperturbed until doomsday, and that it would have to be Morty who first unmasked. It was Morty.

"Corfus," he said finally, "I'd like to tell you a story."

"That would be only fair," the baron replied. "You've listened to several of mine."

"Before I begin," said Morty, "I want to make it plain that I'm here not only as one who is going to accuse you of murder, but also as judge and jury."

"The court of El Granada." The baron nodded smilingly. "A charming locale in which to be tried."

"I'll enter the evidence quickly," said Morty, "since, of course, it will offer no surprise to you. My only reason for boring you possibly with the details is to convince you they are in my possession."

"You will not bore me," the baron said. "May I give you some more wine?" He refilled Morty's glass.

Morty drank it absent-mindedly. "I'll begin with the redheads," he said. "I couldn't satisfy myself about the significance of those redheads. I knew, of course, they were decoys for Dickie and I knew Dickie was a decoy for Uncle Albert. But why should a man with such authentic paintings to see go through such a hocus-pocus to meet the art-hungry Malchen?

"This question, of course, was among the several answered last night. You needed both Dickie *and* Uncle Albert on the scene. You, naturally, were going to be absent. And you wanted someone present at the scene of Malchen's death besides your butler. The old gentleman with the Heidelberg scar is hardly a character that would bear close questioning.

"And if the mighty Malchen were found dead on the premises of a stranger with nobody but that dubious creature on the scene, there would be considerable questioning. Dickie was perfect insurance against such investigation. Hence Dickie. Hence all the hocus-pocus."

The baron remained a picture of polite interest.

"The part I am grateful for," Morty resumed, "was that you called me over to your table last night to use me—as part of your alibi. That wasn't nice . . . but I enjoyed it. It was fruitful. And now we come to your vital and slightly paranoiac adventure. I knew, of course, from the first that you were neither a crook nor a swindler, but a man of hate . . ."

"Hate," said the baron, in the most amiable of tones, "is the sole diet of continents today."

Morty mopped his face and continued: "Last night, when you spoke over the phone here, the basic nature of the adventure became clear to me. You lied. A lie, my dear fellow, is always the best signpost to the hidden. As long as a man doesn't lie, his secret is safe. My profession of psychoanalysis, as you know, is little more than a lie hunt. I'm always geared to spot a lie. When you said over the phone that you had forgotten the exact hour of your appointment with Uncle Albert, the gong sounded. A man who has devoted two months to bagging a Malchen isn't going to forget any detail of his appointment.

"It was also obvious, while you were talking on the phone, that you had been engaged for two months in establishing a public habit—an El Granada habit of attendance between midnight and one-thirty. This habit would serve as your alibi—this, and ourselves. Yes, indeed El Granada had many uses for you."

The baron glanced at his wrist watch humorously. "It is almost

one," he said, "and I am still in the grip of habit."

"We will be through in time," Morty beamed. "To return to the spectacle of you at the telephone. You showed all the signs of extreme strain. Your hands shook and your face sweated. And I knew that the adventure—a seven-year adventure as we learned last night from Uncle Albert's long-standing fear of murder—had reached its climax. The murder of Malchen was taking place as you held Dickie on the phone."

The baron sighed. "I am confused," he said. "Whom are you accusing—my butler?"

"Heavens, no," Morty said indignantly, and added, "At any rate—only as a very minor performer. The thing was so clear that I was afraid that ass Kenneth O. Bishop—O for ossified—would see it."

Morty shook his head reprovingly at the baron. "You took a big chance killing Mr. Malchen with a Forain portrait," he said, "—a piece of painting that couldn't possibly affect his heart action—except maybe to depress it."

"Forain is a much undervalued artist," said the baron, "and I felt that they were both mad."

"I could see that you had great faith in him," Morty chuckled, "the minute I entered the room. Nevertheless I wondered why an art connoisseur like yourself should honor a fifth-rate canvas with a draped easel. Once I had asked myself that question, my dear Corfus, I needed only to ask another to know all the details of the murder. Were the drapes on the easel closed when Uncle Albert entered the room? They were. The rest was simplicity itself."

Morty paused as if for a round of applause. "Having gorged himself on Memlings and Goyas," he continued, "an art lover like Malchen would turn eagerly to the obvious prima donna of the collection—the canvas honored by a draped easel. Now we arrive at the crime. When I left the room, I made a final observation. I saw the butler, so-called, pulling the heavy drapes closed with some difficulty.

"I noticed that the knob on the cord of the drape rode up to an unusual height when the curtains were closed—in fact above Uncle Albert's head. Uncle Albert had to reach for this knob and pull hard, when he turned at last to gaze at the deadly Forain."

I felt like laughing. "Do you mean that the extra exertion of opening the drapes ended the life of Mr. Malchen?" I asked.

"I mean nothing of the sort," said Morty. "The knob on the drawstring killed him. There was a syringe in that knob, and when he grabbed hold of it, he received a deadly injection."

"Poison?" I looked at the imperturbable baron.

"Obviously," said Morty. "But a special kind of poison, I realized, when Corfus didn't seem to be the least disturbed by the promise of an autopsy. I spent all night over a pharmaceutical volume refreshing my memory about poisons that leave no traces. Today, when that antediluvian medical freak, Dr. Bishop, phoned to assure me the results of the necropsy were entirely negative, I knew. There is only one such fooler: Insulin."

He looked at Corfus triumphantly. "At least two hundred units of insulin were in the needle that was released into the hand of Mr. Malchen when he reached up for that knob and pulled greedily. It was perfect. Your victim received a staggering insulin shock, which nobody can distinguish from the last throes of a fatal coronary attack."

Our table became an oasis of silence in the blaring café. After several moments Morty said, rather appealing, to the baron: "It's your turn, Corfus."

The baron seemed rather tired. "An interesting story," he said softly, "but a little fanciful."

"I haven't gone to the trouble of digging up any proof," said Morty coldly, "but if the police were told to look at Uncle Albert's right palm, they would find a perforation. Also, an analysis of the draw cord on the easel would show insulin, and would also show, I am sure, that a new and more innocent knob has been substituted for the one I have described to you."

The baron seemed to have fallen asleep. I realized with surprise that he was talking—quietly without emphasis.

"Perhaps it will satisfy the judge and jury of the court of El Granada if I reveal my true name. It is Count Eitel von Lichtenfels. This name is my only defense."

Morty beamed. "Naturally I've heard the name. I studied in Berlin, you know. It was one of the big banking families in Germany. But it doesn't shed any light."

"I am sorry," said the baron. "It would have saved us time. The portrait by Fourain that you failed to admire was of my sister —Marie von Lichtenfels."

"Why, of course," said Morty. "Forain didn't do her justice at all. She was a famous beauty."

"Yes, the gods were lavish with her—too lavish. They added one gift too many around her cradle. They bestowed on her the honor of being part Jewess. I don't know the exact percentage, but it was sufficiently large to aggravate Dr. Goebbels. And being perhaps the richest of the undesirables, our family fled Germany in 1935.

"I went to Russia. My father, brother and sister went to London. In London my sister Marie received a cable from the American financier, Albert Malchen. He was in Austria and wished to buy a castle she owned in Salzburg. My father knew Malchen. He had

tried for many years to buy a Rembrandt that was the pride of the Lichtenfels collection."

The baron sipped his wine and looked dreamily at the dance floor. "It is a difficult story to tell," he resumed, "because it has lost none of its horror."

Morty said nothing and we waited for Corfus to continue.

"Malchen asked my sister Marie to meet him in Austria," the baron resumed. "But Austria was dangerous ground for her. It had not yet been gobbled up by the Nazis, but they were sitting at its banquet board, knives in hand. Marie arranged with Malchen to meet him in Zurich, but Malchen failed to appear.

"He sent her a letter explaining that he was bedridden in a sanitarium just across the Austrian border, and he begged her to visit him and close the deal for the castle there. My sister, who was brave and eager to improve the family fortune—for we had fled with little of our wealth—my sister crossed into Austria and arrived at the sanitarium."

"Mr. Malchen was not waiting for her. Instead a group of Gestapo agents seized her and took her to Berlin. You see, it was known to the Nazis that our family on fleeing Germany had buried the bulk of the Lichtenfels art collection somewhere in a forest in Saxony. We had left fifty paintings, very famous ones and worth millions, underground to await our return when the Nazis had finished their day."

The baron sighed. "It was a long day," he said, "longer than we imagined at the time."

He paused.

"In Berlin," the baron resumed, "the Nazis tortured my sister for three months. They disfigured her face and broke her hands and legs. And they were able finally to learn from her the hiding place of the Lichtenfels collection. Mr. Malchen was rewarded immediately for his part in the affair. He was allowed to buy the Rembrandt he had so long coveted, for a comparatively small sum. It hangs in his own collection now.

"Mr. Malchen had evidently heard that the remaining members of the Lichtenfels family had sworn to avenge Marie. My father was not among them. He shot himself after Marie died. Friends in Berlin were permitted to bury her. They wrote us that they were unable to recognize her. Last night my butler, who is my older brother Frederick, and I were able to fulfill the vow."

The baron sighed. "Last night," he said, "my sister watched Mr. Malchen die at her feet. If you will pardon me now"—the baron smiled faintly—"it is one-thirty."

He stood up. "The check has been paid," he said, "and thank you for an interesting evening. I hope we shall see each other again."

"Good night," said Morty, "and

don't forget to burn the cord on that drape."

Baron Corfus bowed and walked toward the vestibule.

"My conscience," said Morty, "doesn't bother me at all. Justice of a very high order has been done."

"It's still murder," I said.

"Murder, my eye," Morty mopped his face. "The whole thing was a fantasy of mine. You can forget about it. Very pleasant fellow, Corfus. Too bad he's not long for this world.

"I made a close study of his physical signs tonight. That cachexia. It can only mean an advanced and pretty well metastasized cancerous condition. The man is probably in constant pain. I give him six months listening to El Granada music. It's a great place . . . Best in town." Morty beamed, and I followed his eyes around the crowded tables.

They were all there, all the toy faces of the city's night life. Fame, wealth and beauty sat huddled like a flock of bedizened sheep come in from a storm. Outside, the world was exploding on a score of battle fronts. Around us the god of trivia was still in his heaven with his votaries yawning at their devotions.

And the most elegant and ennuied of them all was Baron Corfus bowing his good night to Ganzo in the doorway.

It's with considerable embarrassment that we must own up to what a Frenchman might refer to, rather gaily, as an editorial faux pas. We have always liked the phrase, since it conveys so pleasingly a multitude of sins. But our own particular faux pas was almost a grievous one. You see, we often buy and schedule our stories months in advance, and the superb Craig Rice novel of suspense, DEATH IN THE FAMILY, *which you expected to get in this issue was inadvertently announced an issue ahead of schedule. It will be in our* NEXT *issue, and this month in its place we have a brilliant lead novelet by the famed George Harmon Coxe. So perhaps no real harm has been done, since a double treat, half still in store, has much to commend it. We sincerely hope you'll forgive us!*

the devil's wind

by . . . E. Phillips Oppenheim

Out of the burning sunshine and the pitiless wind came the white, cameo-like face of the dead girl. Was her innocence an evil mask?

THE MISTRAL RAGED, and all the way from Marseilles to Monaco the almost uncanny beauty of the country at such times brought scant relief to nerve-racked humanity. In the background the snow-capped Alps seemed to have moved a hundred miles nearer to the sea—even the violet line of the Esterels was traced now with the hard precision of a pencil cutting its way into the skies.

At Marseilles the sportsmen of the underworld murdered their women, convinced that the worst that could happen to them would be a few words of gentle admonition from the authorities.

In the more sophisticated region of Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo, that part of the population who had the misfortune to be overcome by drink in the streets were conducted courteously to their homes by apologetic gendarmes. "It is the mistral season. What can you expect?" It was the madness of the devil's wind . . . Even on the terrace of the Royalty Restau-

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Whether poison-dart diplomacy in Cairo drawing rooms, or intrigue and high adventure on the seven seas is E. Phillips Oppenheim's particular forte it is difficult to say. For half a century his novels have mirrored both aspects of his story-writing genius, and we may add that the author of THE GREAT IMPERSONATION *and* THE GLENLITTEN MURDER *knows the intricacies of criminal violence too—as this fine story will attest.*

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rant in Monte Carlo it had its effect.

Major Costerleys, a somewhat frail but charming old gentleman, one of the oldest and most esteemed residents of the Principality, brought his bath chair to a standstill by the side of the table where his friend, Colonel Morse, late of the U. S. Army Intelligence, was seated.

"I don't touch anything as a rule in the morning," the major said, after the customary greetings. "I must get the dust out of my throat somehow or other, though. You gentlemen will join me?"

"We have just ordered," Morse explained. "If you stay long enough, though, there's no telling what may happen."

The Major shook his head. "I'm going across the road as soon as I've finished my drink," he confided. "Thank heavens, I have some men coming in for bridge this afternoon and don't need to turn out again today."

"How is Miss Caroline this morning?" Morse asked.

"Not up when I left," her father grumbled. "She's all right, though. Late hours seem to agree with these young people. There's the Countess's car there, I see," he said, glancing toward the waiting automobiles. "I expect that means that the child's out to lunch with her again."

He set down his glass, waved his hand to his friend, and glided off out of the gate, across the road, disappearing into the hall of the Imperial Palace Flats.

"Dear old humbug," Colonel Morse said, smiling. "He's always grumbling at Caroline's being out so much, and yet nothing makes him happier than to think how popular the child is."

"Pretty and attractive," his companion, Dr. Jarvis, a retired physician, admitted. "All the same, she's a selfish little pig."

"Better not let her father hear you say so," Morse warned him. "Both he and her mother worship the girl. . . . Doctor, I'm going to have another. This accursed mistral has made my throat like a lime kiln."

His friend, who occupied the other chair at the table, shook his head deprecatingly. "The mistral," the doctor declared, "is the most cleansing of all nature's elements in this part of the world. It kills, in all probability, a thousand million germs a second."

"All the same," the Colonel said, "haven't you ever felt the impulse to kill someone when this wind blew hard in your face and the sun shone on your head, and all your friends seemed to be suddenly hard, brilliant, but hateful people?"

"Nerves," was the abrupt commentary. "Certainly I never feel anything of the sort."

Suddenly from close at hand, from somewhere across the open space where the few automobiles

were parked, and opposite to which was the entrance to the Imperial Palace Flats, there came the sharp, biting report of a service revolver.

The Colonel sprang to his feet. "Great heavens," he exclaimed. "Someone else has felt it!"

Owing to the disconcerting ravages of the wind, Colonel Morse and his companion were the only two customers seated outside in the gardens of the restaurant, and from the interior, which was rather more crowded than usual, the report was inaudible.

Morse was the first to thread his way between two of the automobiles drawn up against the curb. He was followed closely by Dr. Jarvis, his late companion, and two chauffeurs made almost simultaneous appearance, evidently from the neighborhood of their vehicles, one still carrying the newspaper he had been reading.

The third chauffeur remained in the driving seat of his powerful car, his face as white as the face of a ghost, his dilated eyes fixed upon a very terrible sight.

Stretched motionless upon the ground in the middle of the dusty street in front of the flats, and in a direct line with the entrance to the restaurant, was the crumpled-up body of a girl. The wind had played havoc with her skirts, and the béret she had been wearing had parted company with her yellow hair.

She, herself, however, lay ominously still.

Those few seconds of awed silence disclosed a hideous little cameo of closely cut drama which no one who was there ever forgot. The burning sunshine and the pitiless wind—Dr. Jarvis rising slowly from his knees where he had been bending over the fallen figure, remembering even in that terrible moment to brush the dust and small flints from his trousers. Colonel Morse, with his arms outstretched to keep back the crowd added to every moment by people streaming out of the restaurant. All these things seemed natural but terribly impressive adjuncts.

"Is she dead?" Morse asked.

The doctor nodded. "I will put her in my car and drive her to the hospital," he said. "Quite useless, though. Will you please get these chauffeurs to help me?"

In two minutes it was all over. The body of the girl had been lifted into the automobile, which the doctor himself drove. There was not a speck of blood upon the road, no sign of any struggle. The girl had been shot through the heart, collapsed and died before she could even call out.

Morse summoned one of the proprietors of the restaurant. "Telephone to the Commissaire of Police to come at once," he said. "Also send to the Casino for Commissaire Delous. Tell Guido to try and keep the people back from

here. The police should be the first to search the ground."

Francis hurried off on his mission. Colonel Morse, bareheaded, remained at his post. His manner showed all possible reverence and distress, but his eyes at every opportunity were searching the ground between the low curbstone of which the girl had stepped and the spot where she had lain. Clear-headed though he was in every emergency, his brain was in a turmoil. The whole thing seemed incredible. Carrie Costerleys, the little girl with whom he had danced and flirted lightly only a few hours ago—pretty, selfish, shallow-brained, but amusing always and amazingly vital—DEAD!

The hot wind bit him, but he shivered as he faced the questions which everyone else was debating. What enemy in the world could a child like this have had? Whose hatred could have brought her to so pitiless a death? She had been the spoilt plaything of the place, the epitome of its gayety and frivolity. Her life had seemed like an open book to everybody. What hidden story could there have been which had culminated in so overwhelming a tragedy?

A car flashed round the corner and drew up in front of the entrance of the flats.

Colonel Morse retired from his solitary vigil. He moved, however, only a few yards away. He was slowly absorbing the whole scene into his mind—the open doors of the building through which she must have issued, the three automobiles, the two chauffeurs standing talking together, the third rigid in his driving seat . . .

The Commissaire of Police of Monaco showed himself to be a man of discretion and determination. The exit of the short road leading to the restaurant and to the Imperial Palace Flats was guarded by a couple of gendarmes, carbines in hand, and no vehicle, chauffeur, nor any of the visitors to the restaurant were allowed to leave. A gendarme also guarded the steps down into the Boulevard des Moulins.

A preliminary examination was held in the extension to the restaurant, which was separated from the restaurant proper by a thick curtain. One by one the morning patrons of the place were led before the Commissaire, and practically every one of them gave the same reply—they had heard nothing of the report and their view of the exit from flats was blocked by the cars. They had, in short, neither seen nor heard anything of the tragedy.

Afterwards it was the turn of the chauffeurs. The possible motive for anyone in the position of a chauffeur committing a vicious and deadly murder, when the victim was a young woman in an utterly different world, was hopelessly obscure, but the fact remained that the fatal shot was most easily fired from behind or

between or even inside one of the cars.

However, it appeared that not one of the three chauffeurs had seen the girl on her exit, had seen anyone else in the street, or had been able to form any idea as to whence the bullet had come. All three of them had heard the report and had immediately been on the qui vive. There was the girl lying in the dust, but no signs of any other person, no possible indication of the direction from which death had reached her.

The Commissaire, at the end of the inquiry, was a tired and a puzzled man. "One gathers but little light concerning this terrible affair," he said gravely to Morse. "I ran into the hospital on my way here. The young lady was shot through the heart from the front. There was no one in the road between the automobiles and the flats. The bullet must have come, therefore, from behind or inside one of the automobiles or the gardens. You, yourself, with the doctor, were the only people in the gardens."

"The topmost of the steps leading down into the street would have been a point of vantage," Morse suggested.

The Commissaire extended his hands. "But that," he pointed out, "was within a few feet of where you were seated. You must have heard footsteps or been conscious of the proximity of the report if the gun had been fired from there."

"That is quite true," Morse agreed after a moment's reflection. "I was talking to my friend, the doctor, at the time. If a shot had been fired so close to us it would have pretty well blown our heads off."

The Commissaire considered the matter with knitted brows, tugging all the time at his small black mustache. "Is it possible, Colonel," he asked, "that anyone could have shot Mademoiselle in the way she was shot and escaped into the flats before you were on your feet?"

"Absolutely impossible," Morse declared confidently. "Mademoiselle was shot through the heart approaching in this direction. It was a matter of seconds before the doctor and I were on our feet and in view of the scene of the tragedy. There was not a soul in sight. Further, no one left the place before your arrival and no one has left it since."

"It is clear, then," the Commissaire decided, "that the murderer must either be one of those three chauffeurs or is at present in the restaurant."

A gendarme approached and saluted. "Mesdames and messieurs are anxious to know whether they can leave," he announced.

"I am sorry," was the curt reply; "no one is to leave at present. I require a few minutes for reflection."

There was no grumbling. Secretly, no one wanted to move. Everyone had the feeling that at any moment there might be a dramatic finale to this terrible episode. By the Commissaire's orders two more gendarmes were posted at the entrance to the flats. The whole of the people now, therefore, who could have been concerned in the crime were under his control. He made his way into the restaurant.

"I regret the necessity very much, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "but I must ask you all—every one of you, without exception—to submit yourselves to a search."

"A search! What for?" protested one of the habitues.

"The weapon from which the shot was fired that killed Mademoiselle Costerleys."

"But how could it have been fired from here?" someone asked.

"I admit that it could not have been," the Commissaire agreed. "On the other hand, I do not know who was inside the restaurant and who was in the gardens when the shot was fired. If I made a difference I would have to rely upon hearsay. It is better that every one of you here should submit to a brief search. I ask you as good citizens all of you to help me."

No one made serious objections. The search was a thorough one and it was concluded in about twenty minutes. It was, as everyone, including the Commissaire, had expected, unsuccessful. The latter then visited the cordon which he had drawn around the automobiles. He called one of the two gendarmes to him.

"The cars here must be searched closely," he ordered. "It does not matter to whom they may belong. Remember that it was only a matter of hiding inside one of them for a few seconds. While you proceed with this the chauffeurs are to come inside and I will interrogate them. Who are the owners of the automobiles, Inspector?"

"The nearest one, the big limousine, sir," the man replied, pointing it out, "is owned by Lady Hart. She lives at Mentone but comes over here most mornings. That is her chauffeur in dark blue standing by the car. He has a very good character."

"And the next one?"

"That belongs to Milady Lewitt, an Englishwoman, who has a villa at Beaulieu. The chauffeur is French and he has been in her service, I believe, for many years. We see him on the road most days."

"And the third?"

"The long automobile like a racing car—that belongs to the Comtesse de Croilles. It came here empty to take Miss Costerleys over to the Comtesse's villa at Eze."

"And the chauffeur?"

"The young man in black livery seated at the wheel."

"Is he very well known here?"

The inspector shook his head. "He is an Italian—a stranger to most of us, I think, sir."

"Instruct the three men to leave their cars and follow me into the room leading out of the restaurant," the Commissaire directed. "Meanwhile, get on with the search. Is that understood, Inspector?"

"Perfectly, Monsieur."

The Commissaire strolled back towards the room in which he had held his brief inquiry, looking carefully at each vehicle as he went. The inspector spoke a word or two to the two nearest chauffeurs, who prepared to follow him. When he reached the third one, however, the young Italian appeared to hesitate.

"My mistress," he said, "must be informed at once of what has happened. Madame will be greatly upset. She was expecting Madmoiselle Costerleys for lunch."

"These are unimportant matters," the inspector told him curtly. "You must wait for permission to leave the place and come with me at once to the Commissaire."

The man appeared to be about to descend, and the inspector half turned away. In another moment, however, there was a roar from the super-charged engine. The inspector swung around. The chauffeur was bending over the wheel, and the powerful car, which had started away with a jump, was already near the corner, racing towards the exit from the street where the two gendarmes were posted.

"Thunderation!" the inspector shouted. "Return at once. You are not permitted to leave."

There was no response. The inspector signaled to the gendarmes below, one of whom immediately stepped into the middle of the road and leveled his carbine. The driver of the car took no notice. He swung round the corner on two wheels and disappeared from sight.

"Shoot, you idiot!" the inspector shouted wildly.

The man shook his head. The inspector suddenly remembered that, according to a recently issued order, unless used on special duty, carbines were to be carried unloaded. He dashed back to the restaurant, brushing to one side the people who were streaming out, attracted by the sound of the shouting. He sprang to the telephone.

"What is it that has arrived?" the Commissaire demanded breathlessly.

The inspector pointed outside to the empty space where the big car had stood.

"It is the automobile of the Comtesse de Croilles," he explained. "When I told the chauffeur that he must submit himself to interrogation he declared that he must return to his mistress to take her the news. He has one of

those quick-starting cars. He was gone before I could reach him. The man below failed to stop him . . . Operator—Police Headquarters, Monaco—quick!"

The Commissaire himself snatched away the instrument and jabbered his commands. The frontier gendarmerie, Beaulieu, and Nice were spoken to. The main roads were to be barricaded and barred. At all costs the car of the Comtesse de Croilles with the black-liveried chauffeur was to be stopped. Let them serve out loaded carbines all along the coast and shoot if necessary. Mentone was to be notified also and guards to be placed on the Upper Corniche.

"I shall come to Headquarters myself to fetch the other car," the Commissaire shouted, tossing the receiver to the inspector. "I shall go to Nice by the lower road and confer with Monsieur Dubois there."

The few people left in the place were stupefied. Colonel Morse drew the two chauffeurs to one side.

"What sort of a man is he, this chauffeur of the Comtesse de Croilles?" he inquired.

"Pretty well a stranger to us, sir," one of the men replied. "He has been driving for the Comtesse for about a year, and often used to come up here to fetch Miss Costerleys, but he never spoke much to any of us."

"As we put it in English, sir," the other man said, "he sort of gave himself airs. That didn't go very well with any of us, so we left him alone."

"What do you suppose he meant by racing off like that?" the Colonel asked. "Did he lose his head or what?"

"Must have gone crazy, sir, I should think."

"It's this bloody mistral," the other chauffeur suggested.

"See anything of him about the time the shot was fired?"

"He hadn't moved from his seat ever since he came," the English chauffeur declared. "He reversed his car against the curb—he's a fine driver, I will say that for him—and he just sat there looking like a ghost. Jules and I were the other side of my car, with the hood open, looking at one of my plugs, when the shot was fired, but he was sitting there just the same a few seconds afterwards."

The Colonel crossed the road and exchanged a few words with the hall porter of the flats. Major and Mrs. Costerleys had been informed of the tragedy by the doctor, he was told. Mrs. Costerleys had fainted, and the Major had had one of his bad attacks.

"My stick is in the Major's chair," Morse said. "Do you mind if I fetch it?"

"I noticed it when he came in, sir," the man replied. "If you will excuse me, that's the bell for the lift. Would you mind just stepping in the box-room and fetching it

yourself?" he finished with a nod.

Morse pushed open the door of the luggage-room on the right, where the Major usually left his Bath chair, and recovered his stick. He lingered in the place for several moments—an untidy-looking apartment filled with disused trunks, packing cases and a bicycle or two. He looked thoughtfully out of the window at the spot where the body of the girl had been found, at the little knot of people still left talking in excited fashion across the way, at the trees and shrubs leaning back before the increasing gale.

As he recrossed the road a few minutes later, his cheeks stung by the wind, he was in very bad spirits and a very bad temper.

"Curse this mistral," he muttered to himself . . .

At five o'clock that afternoon Lady Alice, one of Caroline Costerley's intimate friends, but by no means her usual neat and imperturbable self, was shown up into Colonel Morse's salon at the Hotel de Paris. She had evidently spent a wretched afternoon. Her eyes seemed to be already pleading with him for help and courage even before she spoke. He helped her to an easy-chair and ordered tea.

"Don't talk about it unless you want," he begged. "I don't mind confessing that I went into the Casino and played for an hour or two this afternoon, hoping to forget it."

She threw off her cap and held her forehead for a minute.

"Colonel," she said, "you saw the terrible beginning this morning, I the awful end. I was to have lunched with Eugénie de Croilles. The news was telephoned to the villa while Eugénie and I were waiting. Eugénie is distracted, and I don't wonder at it."

"Could the Comtesse throw any light at all upon the matter?" he asked.

"Too much," Lady Alice groaned. "I am afraid that the wretched chauffeur, who has acted like a lunatic, is at the bottom of it all."

"You mean that he—shot Carrie?"

"I am afraid so," Lady Alice sighed. "Of course, Caroline always was an utter fool, and Antonio, the chauffeur, is the son of an Italian count or something of that sort. Eugénie knew that he was by way of being a gentleman when she engaged him, but she didn't think it mattered. She is proof against that sort of thing herself. All the same, if anyone had asked me, I should have said that Carrie was better able to get out of that kind of mischief than anyone I know."

"She was a heartless little devil," Morse said.

"She told Eugénie last night that she had promised to go away with him. This morning she telephoned that she had written him to say she had changed her mind. We

were all going to talk it over at luncheon."

"I see," Morse murmured. "You think, then, that he knew when he went to fetch her this morning that the whole thing was off and that, out of revenge, he shot her?"

"I am afraid," Lady Alice admitted, "that there is no other solution. He would scarcely have run off like this in the face of police orders unless he were guilty."

"According to her own story, she had been rather asking for it," the Colonel meditated.

"She was honest enough last evening," Lady Alice confided. "She told Eugénie—she admitted it quite openly—that she had led him on. She said that he made love so beautifully."

"Silly little idiot!"

Tea was served, and Lady Alice drank hers feverishly.

"Of course," she remarked, "everything now depends upon whether they are able to arrest Antonio. He never came back to the villa, you know, and up till half an hour ago, at any rate, there was no news of his having been captured."

"Do you want him to get away?" Morse asked curiously.

Lady Alice acknowledged it frankly.

"It was a foul and terrible thing to do, of course," she said, "but it would be much better for everyone concerned if he escaped. There would be a certain amount of scandal, of course, but nothing to what there would be if he were brought up in court and pleaded his love affair with her as an excuse. She's just the sort of idiot to have written him a lot of silly letters. It would kill poor old Major Costerleys, to say nothing of her mother. They are charming old people, but they are very proud and they are devoted to Caroline, though neither of them realized what a flighty little fool she really was."

"What did you think of the young man?"

"I liked him, the little I knew of him," she confessed. "Of course, that really was not very much. He was always driving Caroline backwards and forwards —at all hours of the night, too. I have spoken only a few words to him, but I have always found him most respectful and nice."

"Perhaps if he's a decent sort he might keep his mouth closed, even if he's caught," Morse suggested.

"He won't be able to keep other people's mouths closed," she sighed. "A young man like that doesn't shoot one of his employer's friends dead for nothing."

The telephone rang. Colonel Morse remained for some minutes in conversation with his caller. When he had finished and rung off he passed on the news.

"The car has been found," he said, "at the bottom of the gorge

at the stop they have lately christened 'suicide corner.' "

"On the Middle Corniche?"

He nodded. "Just past the bridge at Eze. The car must have been deliberately driven over the precipice. It was completely smashed to pieces, of course."

"And Antonio?"

"No trace of him."

"I think that's queer," Lady Alice remarked. "Did no one see the car pass the cafes at Eze?"

"There appears to have been scarcely anyone about. This mistral was blowing to such an extent that all the outside chairs of the cafes had been taken away and no one was able to stand upright. A Chasseur Alpin, who was sheltering with his motorcycle, saw the car flash by, but he had been up in the mountains and had not heard about the murder. There was someone cowering over the wheel when it passed, and he put its terrific speed down to the fact that the driver had got the mistral in his blood."

Lady Alice indulged in a dreary little gesture. "It would have made a finer ending," she said, "if he had gone over with the car."

"I shouldn't think," Morse reflected, "that there was one chance in twenty of his getting away. The whole neighborhood is being thoroughly patroled, and unless he has friends near and a change of clothes—which is not likely—they ought to have him before nightfall."

"Poor Antonio!" she whispered.

"You are not sympathizing with him?"

She looked speculatively away. "I wonder," she murmured. "The dead are beyond sympathy. Sometimes it is the living who need it." . . .

A pale-faced young man in a dark traveling suit was dining alone, a few evenings later, under the trees of a well-known hotel at Brignoles. He had ordered his dinner carefully and he ate in leisurely fashion. His clothes might have been ready-made but on his slim figure they looked well. His linen and cravat were well chosen, his hands well kept. He was in the act of pouring himself a glass of water when he paused to watch the little incident which was developing before his eyes.

A car had been driven rapidly into the short drive and pulled up in front of the main entrance to the hotel. It was driven by a gendarme whose companion was an older man in plain clothes but with an official air. Both men descended. They engaged the proprietor, who hurried out to meet them, in conversation. After a few words the latter pointed across the garden to the trees, under which the solitary diner was seated.

The hand which held the glass of water shook ever so slightly. A few drops were spilled upon the tablecloth, but when the young

man raised it to his lips he drank steadily until the glass was empty. The gendarme and his companion were approaching. They had left the avenue. They had reached the grass. For a single moment the young man looked over each shoulder, looked even behind him at the brick wall. There was no way of escape. He knew that very well. He was trapped. The man in plain clothes, alert, military in bearing saluted him courteously.

"Your name is Antonio Fraletti?" he asked.

The young man leaned back in his chair. "That is so," he admitted.

"You are charged with the murder of Miss Caroline Costerleys two mornings ago outside the Royalty Restaurant at Monte Carlo. Why did you do it?"

Blank silence.

"Why did you do it?" the Commissaire repeated. "Come, come, Fraletti, there is no secret about the matter. You might just as well own up. Why did you do it, and what have you done with the revolver?"

Blank silence. The young man poured himself out another glass of water and drank it. He was on the point of proceeding with his meal when his interlocutor stepped forward and laid his hand upon the table. His tone had become sterner.

"You will have to talk presently, you know, young man. Why not now? Silence does not help you. We shall find means to open your lips."

There was a whispering of wind in the thick leaves overhead but no other sound. The young man seemed to have lost interest in the proceedings. He had taken up his knife and fork again. The Commissaire laughed unpleasantly.

"Well, well," he said, "there's no need to waste time over you here. You are under arrest, Fraletti. We are going to take you back to Monaco."

The young man shivered. "Could it not be somewhere else?" he asked.

The Commissaire rubbed his hands and smiled. "That touches you!" he exclaimed. "Monaco—the scene of your crime.

The young man rose to his feet. "I am willing to go where you choose to take me," he said. "I have a small car here. Will you permit that I follow you if I give you my parole?"

The Commissaire was amused. "So that you might do as you did with the automobile of the Comtesse de Croilles, eh? This time, though, I suppose you would go with the car. No, my friend. You will sit behind in my own little car. You will be handcuffed to the gendarme here. A strong man, mark you. I, myself shall drive. In that fashion we may return safely."

And in that fashion Antonio Fraletti left Brignoles . . .

Three days later there was a

great change in the appearance of Fraletti. He lay in a most unpleasant cell in the dreaded prison of the Principality. He was unshaven, his clothes were unbrushed, his linen was soiled. He had lost his composure. He scratched now and then at the walls. He even shook the door. His cheeks had fallen in. His eyes were full of the hunted light of the utterly stricken man. When at last the warden appeared he rushed at him, only to be thrown backwards upon the floor.

"Come, come, not so violent," his jailer admonished. "What's the matter with you?"

"I want water," Antonio moaned.

"Well, you can ask Monsieur le Commissaire," was the curt reply. "You have had your allowance. The first lot, remember, you threw away—as you did your food. Come along; you are going to see him now."

"Anywhere—anywhere," the young man begged, "out of this place!"

They half dragged him into Headquarters. The man in authority was seated behind his desk. He looked up as the gendarmes entered with the prisoner and he smiled faintly. The young man would surely, in this condition, be more amenable.

"Bring the prisoner here," he ordered, pointing to a space in front of his desk.

Antonio was led to the place indicated.

"Are you feeling a little more loquacious this morning, Antonio Fraletti?" the Commissaire asked.

"Give me some water," was the brusque but imploring reply.

"Water, eh?"

"The prisoner threw away his first two allowances," the gendarme explained.

The Commissaire pointed to the water bottle which stood upon his own table. "Give him a tumblerful," he directed.

The gendarme obeyed. Antonio drank it feverishly.

"One more," the Commissaire conceded. "Now, Antonio, you look more like yourself again. Don't let us waste time about this business. As a matter of form we want the revolver with which you shot Caroline Costerleys."

Silence.

"I repeat the demand," his questioner continued sharply. "There is no object in giving us trouble, Antonio Fraletti. We know that you killed the girl. Why did you do it?"

Silence. The prisoner was looking steadily at the wall.

"You were probably badly treated by the young lady," the official went on. "Young ladies do forget themselves sometimes, and I expect when you are washed and brushed up and have your best clothes on you are a decent-looking fellow. Young people will be young people. The young lady

had been encouraging you, without a doubt.

"We know all about those letters. We are quite prepared to believe that the young lady treated you badly. No reason why you should be obstinate about it. Come along, young fellow, and we will send you down to your dinner and there may be a few delicacies on the plate—but where shall we find the revolver?"

Silence. More hopeless than ever. The Commissaire tried again and again to break through the silence of Antonio Fraletti, which seemed by now to have placed him behind an impregnable wall. As last, the former rose to his feet.

"Take him back to his cell," he ordered. "No extras—lowest class of rations—no lights. We will try him again a little later."

Antonio was led away. For the moment his expression of agony had departed. Looking at his rigid features, one might have imagined that he had succeeded in mesmerizing himself . . .

Everybody said that the Costerleyses were wonderful. They made a terribly pathetic but dignified appearance at their daughter's funeral, and one by one they received a few intimate friends. The Major was perhaps a little frailer than ever and for the time he had given up his pet hobby—the bath chair—and drove with his wife at the quiet hours of the day in the limousine. One morning he actually limped across the road and took his place by Colonel Morse's side.

"Got to be done some day, my friend," he remarked, as he released his hand from the other's grip. "There's the wife, too, you know. Got to face it. Order me something—I don't care what. This first morning keep the others away if you can. If you and I have a few minutes alone I shall feel I have broken the ice."

"You have done the right thing," Morse assured him. "I'll choke 'em off if anyone comes near."

The Major sat in silence. His eyes wandered now and then around the place but he appeared to notice none of the greetings which came to him from every side. He was wearing dark glasses, the better to excuse himself.

Presently, however, as though irritated by the obscurity, he took them off. He leaned forward in his chair. He gazed directly at the spot where the Comtesse de Croilles's car had stood. He finally spoke to his companion, but his eyes were fixed upon the place. He seemed to be seeing a ghost.

"Must have had some sort of grit, that young man," he said. "Never opened his mouth, so the papers say. Never answered when they charged him, never gave way once when they put him through the third degree, never spoke when they brought him into court."

"Quite a little drama, the clos-

ing scene," Morse agreed somberly. "A French court is very seldom quiet, but when they sentenced him you could hear a pin drop. Afterwards there was a sort of murmur of voices in a minor key—sounded like a long drawn out sob!"

"This was yesterday?" the Major murmured.

"Yesterday," Morse replied. "I suppose we all ought to have been ashamed of ourselves, but everyone who could fight or beg his way in was in the courthouse."

The Major's voice had sunk lower still. "What was the verdict?" he asked, in a scarcely audible whisper.

Morse looked at his companion in surprise. "Haven't you read the paper?"

The Major shook his head. "I read the beginning," he acknowledged. "I couldn't finish it. There was a mist before my eyes all the time."

"He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged."

"To be hanged," the Major repeated.

"Pretty awful retribution."

"When?"

"Sunday week," Morse confided. "They don't give them long to think it over. The young man seems to have had an amazing amount of self-control. He refused to plead, to answer a single question, to make any comment."

"He said nothing when he was sentenced?"

"Not a word. He just turned around, and they marched him off."

The Major rose unsteadily to his feet. He leaned on Morse's arm. "Give me your help across the street," he begged. "It's time I was going home."

They crossed the road together, the Major a very frail figure clinging to his stalwart companion. When they reached the hall they both, as though with one accord, stopped. Without any word between them, they turned to the luggage-room. The Major closed the door behind them.

"If you will open that window about a foot," he pointed, "I will show you where I stood when I shot Caroline. Here," he went on, unfastening a locker in which were a few walking sticks, caps, and other impedimenta of the sort, "is the revolver."

They stood once more at the window.

"You don't seem surprised," the Major muttered under his breath, his watery blue eyes twinkling nervously. "Did you know?"

"I guessed," Morse answered gravely. "I came in here that afternoon. The window was still open and you had left the key in the door of the locker."

"The letters!" Major Costerleys exclaimed.

"They are still there," Morse assured him. "I glanced at only one. Directly I read the first few

sentences I understood. I put them carefully back in the jacket pocket."

"Now I will tell you," Major Costerleys went on. "Antonio sent in the letters addressed to her. She had probably prayed for their return. Well she might, for, God help her, they were terrible. I opened the packet. I read them. I was nearly crazy with the gossip that was going round. I made up my mind to kill him. It was a long carry, but that is a powerful weapon and I have been a crack shot all my life.

"I was there waiting when Caroline came out. She paused and looked back. She turned, almost as though she were coming back to the house. Morse, what came over me I don't know, but all of a sudden I saw that it was she who was the sinner—not he. A sentence of one of those letters blazed in my brain and, as she stood there facing me, I shot her. That's all. I always felt that you knew."

"Yes, I knew," Morse repeated gravely. "Perhaps it would have been better if I had left things alone. Give me the weapon, Major."

The Major backed away. There was a clearer light in his blue eyes. One felt that his fingers were tightening upon the butt of the revolver.

"Don't be foolish, Morse," he said. "You can't seriously imagine that a man of my age, an invalid suffering day by day, who has killed his own daughter in cold blood, wants to go on living. I just had to set matters straight. It is pretty well done now. You can see—to him."

Morse moved forward. He had never felt in such a state of indecision in his life. Suddenly the poor little Major, with his peevish mouth and watery eyes, seemed to have taken charge of the situation.

"You can tell the whole truth if you think it necessary," the latter concluded. "On your story, though, I think they should let him go. Try that, anyhow. It would be better for the wife. I won't try to shake hands. It might make you an accessory. Good-by."

Morse's involuntary movement forward, his shout of remonstrance, were both too late. Major Costerley, with a very firm finger and an upward movement, had blown out his brains.

Those millions of armchair detectives—all the Saint fans—who have given unstinted allegiance to the rollicking, offbeat rogue will hail with rejoicing his return to the silver screen in a new RKO RADIO *picture featuring Louis Hayward in the Templar role. It's called* THE SAINT'S GIRL FRIDAY, *and it can be predicted with assurance that this rousing drama of bullets, blondes and blackmail will set a new entertainment high.*

the murder everybody saw

by . . . Helen Nielsen

Luanne's young innocence made Jaffe hate himself—and every crooked thing he had ever done.

JAFFE WASN'T the first man who wanted to kill Twelvetrees. It was more or less of a popular movement, like tax reduction and world peace—and just as successful. Twelvetrees was big enough to be hated and entirely too big to be reached; whereas Jaffe could be reached anytime just by rustling a few samples of the long and lovely green.

On the frosted glass door it said: *Hamilton Jaffe—Public Relations.* Inside the door was a tiny office with one window, a desk, a telephone, and a couple of ancient leather chairs. Jaffe always sat lightly in his chair, his wiry body tensed on the edge of the seat like a streetcar passenger approaching his stop. Twelvetrees, on the other hand, resembled a well-dressed hippopotamus oozing all over the upholstery.

"I guess you get the idea," he said. "You've been in the game long enough."

Even then Jaffe disliked Twelvetrees, but he also felt flattered. A man who had the city in his back pocket didn't usually consult

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*Helen Nielsen's first novel—*THE KIND MAN*—brought this comment from the Saturday Review: "Top performance—more please!" When her second and third books appeared the same periodical referred to her as "the first important addition to the mystery story field in the past decade." We are inclined to go overboard in much the same way about this, her newest story.*

with a second rate organizer, and Jaffe was upgrading himself at that. Second rate was a little high for a man who hadn't handled a winner since the Red Army Chorus had a Hooper rating.

He passed a nervous hand over the sparse growth on his upper lip and regarded the fat man thoughtfully. There had to be an angle. Twelvetrees didn't need his advice.

"Neves is an amateur," he said at last. "His campaign is run by amateurs."

"So are a lot of voters amateurs," Twelvetrees answered.

"Well, there's always the old smear sheet pitch. The guy is thirty-seven years old. He couldn't live that long without making a few mistakes."

Jaffe's remarks seemed to amuse Twelvetrees. A pair of dimples appeared in his fat cheeks and it was a rather frightening sight. Twelvetrees never smiled unless somebody was going to get hurt.

"I'm afraid you've missed the point, Mr. Jaffe," he said. "I've not come to bury Alan Neves but to raise him. He's an excellent candidate—young, aggressive, good war record and a photogenic family. That's a hard combination to beat with an old has-been like Carter Brandon."

"But Brandon's your man—"

"*Was* my man," Twelvetrees corrected. "Let's face it, the voters are fed up with Mayor Brandon. He's grown old and careless. He's lost the master's touch. Administrations have come and gone many times in this city without disturbing my operations simply because I keep abreast of the times. When the people want a change I agree with them."

The dimples returned briefly and Jaffe began to understand. The kingmaker was switching stooges in the middle of the campaign and so naturally he couldn't use one of his own men. He needed a stranger—an old enemy, beaten, discarded and broke.

Jaffe was weary of causes; they were no longer profitable. They didn't pay the rent or buy the pain killer he'd been living on since Nancy went away. A careful man could make a neat roll on this operation without even disturbing the Department of Internal Revenue.

"But you're right about one thing," Twelvetrees continued. "Neves' campaign is run by amateurs and amateurs are people without funds. An experienced man at the helm would have no trouble financing the race . . . discreetly, of course."

"And when he wins," Jaffe said, "can you trust him?"

"Trust him?" The dimples had a riot over that. "I never trust anyone, Mr. Jaffe. I merely insure my investment."

Within two weeks Hamilton Jaffe had taken over the Alan Neves campaign. One week was

to get off the bottle and into a decent wardrobe, and the other week was to donate his way up from the Indians to the chief. Nobody questioned a prosperous businessman with a bankroll to sink into the campaign. He was just doing his duty to rid the city from corruption.

So there was Jaffe with his new gabardine pants occupying the chairman's seat at the headquarters of the Citizens Committee for Neves, and all those eager amateurs tickled pink to have somebody else do the worrying. For Jaffe it was like old home week. The faces changed and the names on the letter heads differed, but once you were on the team the game proceeded as usual. He felt like a bush leaguer who'd been sold to the majors.

Even the candidate was familiar. Jaffe had seen his kind come and go all his fifty-odd years —honest, ambitious young men who sometimes won and sometimes lost depending on which characteristics they valued least. One look at Alan Neves and he was sure Twelvetrees had made a sound investment. But that was before he met Luanne . . .

". . . thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty!" the girl announced. "Eleven dollars and forty cents and that's just the first day's collection."

She couldn't have been over fourteen and cute as the cover of a sub-deb magazine. Jaffe had even forgotten the look of youth.

"What's all this?" he asked.

"For the campaign. It's from the *Juniors For Neves Club.* I'm chairman."

Eleven dollars and forty cents, mostly in silver, piled up on his desk, and a kid with springtime in her voice smiling at him. Jaffe began to feel as self-conscious as if every line in his face was a betrayal. Sherry had been just fourteen when Nancy took her away. That was over ten years ago—he might be a grandfather by this time—but Luanne made it seem the day before tomorrow.

"You must like this guy Neves," he said.

"Mad about him!"

"Think he'll make a good mayor?"

"Mayor, governor, president—"

"Wait a minute, baby," Neves called out from the doorway, "let's tackle one job at a time. Your dad isn't Ceasar, you know!"

Ceasar! A fool like Alan Neves would say that! Couldn't he read the kid's eyes at all? She wasn't looking at a Ceasar; she was looking at Sir Galahad and Abraham Lincoln combined. She loved that billboard hero so much it hurt just to watch her.

"I don't think you've met my daughter, Mr. Jaffe," Neves added. "Luanne's quite a politician. Better be careful or she'll take that desk away from you."

"That might not be such a bad idea," Jaffe muttered.

"Of course, she's a little prejudiced, but I guess that's only natural."

Neves gave his daughter's shoulder a quick squeeze and flashed his brightest television smile. Natural? Jaffe wished they would both clear the hell out of his office and leave his memories alone. He could almost hear Nancy's words the day she left him for good . . . "I've tried, Ham, God knows I've tried. But I can't have Sherry growing up in this house. I can't have her learning what kind of man her father really is . . ."

I must be getting old, Jaffe thought. *I must be getting soft in the head.* He shoved back his chair and hit the floor with his heels.

"You'll have to excuse me, I've got an appointment," he said, and then went straight to a nice dark bar where he could have one, just one, to drive away the ghosts . . .

It was more like a horse race than a campaign, a race between a track-bred three-year-old, and a worn out nag from a beer wagon. Neves had a handy vocabulary and a delivery that made it easy to believe sin was on its way out. Better than that, he never asked where the money came from to buy all the time he talked up on the airwaves or who paid for all the billboards and mailing literature.

As for the crew-cut kids and motherly ladies who staffed headquarters, they never mentioned money. Someone might ask them to ante. It was the easiest job of Jaffe's life, but he hated it more every day.

The afternoons were the worst. Every afternoon Luanne came straight from school with a fresh batch of teen-agers to help with the mailing. If their enthusiasm wasn't up to hers, she was quite capable of delivering a pep talk on the holy cause of saving the city from Brandon and the Twelvetrees machine that would have done credit to her father.

There was nothing new in what she said. It was as old as Aesop and straight from the copy books, but it hit Jaffe in an area he didn't know he had. Everything was so simple to Luanne. The world was divided into good guys and bad guys, and the good guys always beat the bad guys because they were good and their goodness gave them the victory.

It was corny and beautiful, and Jaffe began to wonder if it had something to do with the way youth was always at odds with age. One kid like Luanne could make fifty years of living seem a double cross on the Creator.

"Isn't it wonderful," she remarked one afternoon, "how whenever there's a great need for someone he always appears?"

"Meaning your dad, I suppose," Jaffe said.

"Well, yes—but I wasn't just thinking of him. I was thinking

of how the campaign wasn't getting anywhere and then one day you walked in, Mr. Jaffe, just as if you were sent."

A little moisture was showing along with the growth on Jaffe's upper lip. "Maybe I was," he said.

"That's the way I feel. It's just like a miracle."

That was the only time in his life Hamilton Jaffe had been mistaken for a miracle, and it made him a little sick. On the same day he started planning a long vacation when this job was finished, because he didn't want to be around when Luanne learned the truth. He was beginning to feel grateful to Nancy.

But on election night the whole show blew higher than the cost of living . . .

Alan Neves' victory was a rout. By ten o'clock Brandon's manager had conceded and by twelve the celebration at headquarters had just about knocked everybody out. There must have been something like it the night after Joshua blew his trumpet . . . but the walls didn't tumble until Carter Brandon walked in like an overdue bill.

Jaffe saw him first. He was in the back room trying to pry Neves away from his congratulatory wires so they could close up and go home, and then suddenly the room was crowded.

It was customary for a defeated candidate to bow out gracefully. But Carter Brandon was more than defeated. He was destroyed. Somebody has to pay the piper when the music stops, and the old man had been listening to the returns all evening until even he could see where the bill was padded. He swayed a little going over to the desk, and then leaned over and thrust his face practically under Neves' nose.

"So this is Twelvetrees' new boy!" he said. "Congratulations, Mr. Mayor. How much did you bring on the auction block?"

Jaffe rushed over, and closed the door to the outer room. It wasn't until he turned around that he saw the other witness to this scene. Luanne had been sleeping in a chair across the room, but she wasn't sleeping any more.

"What the devil are you talking about?" Neves thundered, and the old man began to laugh softly.

"So they didn't tell you," he said. "Bought lock, stock, and barrel and they didn't even tell you!"

"Don't listen to him!" Jaffe broke in. "Can't you see that he's drunk?"

"Drunk?" Brandon braced himself against the desk and twisted his neck about so he could look at Jaffe. "Maybe I am," he said. "I can't think of anyone who would be a better judge of that than Hamilton Jaffe. But maybe I know Mr. Jaffe better than you do, Neves. I was mayor when you weren't old enough to vote.

I remember him from his crusading days when he used to get people so excited . . . and so generous. Some of them are still wondering what happened to their donations—"

"Shut up, you drunken fool!" Jaffe shouted.

Mayor Brandon shut up. He shut up for just about twenty seconds—long enough for Alan Neves to come to his feet and Luanne to run over and cling to his arm as if the earth threatened to swallow him up.

"But Mr. Jaffe has reformed," Brandon added. "My friends tell me, and I do have one or two friends left, that Mr. Jaffe gives away money now instead of collecting it . . . and that's a remarkable thing because two weeks before he took over your campaign, Neves, he didn't have a dime. He didn't even have a decent suit of clothes until Twelvetrees paid him a visit."

Carter Brandon never had a chance to finish his farewell address. Jaffe caught him by the coat collar and hustled him out through the back door. It was chilly outside. The air would do the old man good. But back in the office two stark white faces were waiting for him and one of them was beginning to grow older.

"All right, so you know!" Jaffe said. "You had to find out sooner or later, so now you know! It was Twelvetrees money and he holds the canceled checks. Nothing is what you get for free, Mayor Neves. Maybe even someone as stupid as you can figure the rest!"

Jaffe didn't have to shout but he felt like shouting. He was mad at the whole world—Twelvetrees, Brandon, Hamilton Jaffe, but most of all at Alan Neves for letting his kid stay up so late.

"I'll pay back the money," Neves said. "Every cent."

"Sure you will! You can sell that mortgaged bungalow and let the car go back to the finance company! Maybe Twelvetrees will give you a time plan on the rest!"

Jaffe didn't have to say any more. Twelvetrees knew better than to back a man with a bankroll—only the poor stay bought. Neves was bought, paid for, and delivered, and there was nothing more for Jaffe to do but pick up his hat and coat, and find some more hospitable atmosphere where a man with money in his pockets could buy everything he needed. Even someone to block out the hate in a frightened kid's eyes . . .

It was about six o'clock the next evening before Jaffe sobered up enough to remember there was a world somewhere. He wasn't real sure of it even then, but something was ringing in his ear, and nobody but people would dream up anything so diabolical as a telephone. He reached out and groped for the instrument in the darkness until he remembered to open his eyes.

The lights were still on, and the

apartment looked as if somebody had given quite a party. Someday when he was really sober, if he ever made such a mistake again, he was going to sit down and figure out why he spent so much money for good times he could never remember afterward.

But the telephone was still ringing and Neves started shouting the moment Jaffe picked it up.

"Have you seen Luanne?" he yelled. "Jaffe? Do you hear me? What have you done with Luanne?"

There were all kinds of ways to get sober, black coffee, cold showers—but nothing quite like a cold sweat. Jaffe sat up on the edge of the bed and listened. Luanne was missing. She'd gone to school as usual but she hadn't come home. It was almost six o'clock, and Neves was so scared his voice was breaking.

"If anything's happened to her I'll kill you!" he yelled.

"Wait a minute," Jaffe protested. "Why blame me? I haven't seen her!"

It was when Neves stopped yelling that Jaffe began to worry. For a few seconds there was nothing but the buzzing on the wires, and then his voice came back like an echo from a cavern.

"I want to see Twelvetrees," he said.

"But why—?"

"To tell him that I'll never take office on his terms. To tell him that I'm going before the public tonight with the whole story . . . and then decline the election."

Jaffe slammed the phone back in the cradle. The world was crawling with crooked, twisted people—why did the only honest man he'd ever known have to be an idiot as well? Luanne . . .

It must have been because of Luanne. A man could stretch his conscience to cover just about anything, but he had to play it straight with his kids. Maybe if Jaffe had been in Neves' shoes last night with Sherry hanging onto his arm . . . But Jaffe didn't have time to think about that. What he had to think about was the way Twelvetrees insured his investments.

It was a couple of hours before Jaffe brought Luanne home. They came in style in one of Twelvetrees' limousines with a bodyguard and a heavyweight chauffeur. She wasn't hurt. Except for one little prick on her arm, there wasn't a mark on her that Jaffe hadn't applied the night before. It was a neat business-like arrangement. Alan Neves canceled his speech and his daughter came home. He could even have a souvenir of her adventure because Twelvetrees was thoughtful that way.

"Fortunately," he explained to Jaffe, "I have a little influence with the police. When I learned that the daughter of our mayor-elect had been picked up in a teenage dope raid I exerted that influence. We can't have a scandal

like that in our law-abiding city!"

With dimples he said it, while Jaffe stood in the center of the fat man's study and hated him worse than death.

"Of course, no parent is willing to believe such a charge against his child," he added. "If Neves doubts the story, you can show him these photographs taken at the scene of the raid. I have the plates in my safe. We can't take chances of anything so damaging falling into careless hands. As for the officers, I'm sure they'll be discreet unless our reform mayor feels the law should play no favorites."

"It's a frame!" Jaffe sputtered. "It's a dirty, stinking frame!"

"Yes, isn't it? Now run along and see if Mr. Neves has climbed off his white charger."

And so Jaffe brought Luanne home with no springtime in her voice and no stars in her eyes. He left her in that mortgaged bungalow with an unhorsed hero who wasn't going to slay any dragons, and it seemed all they needed was some crepe on the door. Dead dreams deserved a funeral, too.

Jaffe walked all the way to his office. He didn't want any more rides in that big limousine, and he didn't want any more of that apartment paid for with Twelvetrees' money. The office was his own—cheap, little, and badly worn. The office and Jaffe belonged together.

He turned on the light and went over to the desk. There was a gun in the top drawer, but that wasn't what he'd walked so far to get. A gun could kill Twelvetrees, bodyguard or no, but it couldn't get those plates back or silence all the people who helped put them there. That was the reason Twelvetrees had lived so long. He let men's bodies walk around free; he only kept their souls locked up.

The bottom drawer was deep and roomy, and back behind the tape recorder was a bottle Jaffe kept for emergencies. This was the biggest emergency of his life and it was going to get bigger. It was going to last as long as he lasted, because he never wanted to wander back into that world of innocence again. He never wanted to see another kid, or hear one laugh—or cry.

But when the drawer stood open Jaffe forgot the bottle . . .

The first time the police picked him up Jaffe had only a few lumps and a black eye. They found him on a vacant lot about a quarter of a mile from Twelvetrees' secluded mansion. He seemed dazed and didn't say much at first, but when a couple of reporters put in an appearance he spilled out a tale of woe of how Twelvetrees was out to get him because he'd managed Neves to victory. It made all the front pages for two days—the first day for Jaffe's story and the

next day for Twelvetrees' angry denial.

The next time the police found Jaffe was in an alley behind a downtown saloon. This time he had a gash on his head, a tooth missing, and two fractured ribs. He looked terrible in the news photos and told the same story as soon as his swollen lips allowed him to talk. Twelvetrees made the same angry denials, but this time he had a lawyer along.

It was the day before Neves' installation in office that Jaffe got out of the hospital. He took a cab to his office and looked around. The police protection he'd been bawling for wasn't there, of course, but a big limousine was parked a couple of doors down the street. He grinned as well as he could with the scab on his lip and went inside. About five minutes later Twelvetrees came in.

He still looked like a well-dressed hippopotamus but this time he didn't sit down.

"I had to see for myself," he said. "When there's a lunatic at large I have to see for myself."

Jaffe didn't say anything. He glanced down to make sure the bottom drawer was open.

"All right, you win," Twelvetrees sighed. He took an envelope out of his pocket and slapped it down on the desk. "Now lay off! Take a vacation . . . a long vacation."

"How much?" Jaffe asked, looking at the envelope.

"About ten thousand miles worth if you're smart. There's a freighter leaving for South America tonight. I advise you to be on it."

"And if I'm not?"

"Then you'll get a shorter trip that lasts a lot longer. I'm tired of having trouble with you, Jaffe. You know me. I like things inside the law, but if you want it rough you can have it rough! I want no more headlines . . . understand?"

"Sure, Mr. Twelvetrees, I understand," Jaffe said, "but I can't leave tonight. A protege of mine it taking office in the morning and I'm going to be there for the ceremonies."

"You'll be sorry if you are!" Twelvetrees thundered, and stomped out . . .

The change in city administration was a big affair, especially since it hadn't happened in so many years. The mayor's office in the top floor of City Hall looked like a television sound stage. The microphones and the cameras were there and so was all the viewing population that could spare the time to sit in front of a set.

It was customary to have a nice little ceremony with the outgoing mayor handing over the reins of office to his successor and both of them smiling for the cameras just as if they didn't hate each other's guts. There was a slight break in the custom this time because Carter Brandon was

indisposed—he couldn't be trusted in front of a camera—and Twelvetrees had to officiate in his place. This pleased the viewers even more. The machine is dead, they could say, and then feel secure enough to go back to sleep for another few years.

There may have been a few who thought Alan Neves looked older when he stepped forward to make his acceptance speech. There may have been a few who thought his voice was listless and his words a little trite. But it didn't matter because he didn't get far.

There was a sound of struggling and a sharp cry, and then all the waiting city heard the words that were going to make every front page before the morning was out. "Let loose of me, damn you! Let loose!"

The cameras swung around just in time to catch the back of a huge hippopotamus of a man with his shoulders hunched forward and hands clawing at someone not quite visible. Whoever it was had lungs like a prima donna.

"Take him off of me! Make him let me go . . ."

There was a shattering of glass, and that last terrible word dying away like a fading siren in the distance. It was the first time anyone had seen an actual murder on television—or an actual murderer. For when the big man turned around everybody could see that crazy, bewildered look on his face and the way his extended hands were still cupped the way they had been around the other man's throat. The turning man was Twelvetrees and a few minutes later the body on the street below was identified as Hamilton Jaffe . . .

Alan Neves was beginning to look like a mayor. He was seated at his desk when Twelvetrees came in, an imposing figure with a new hardness about his jawline and a seriousness in his eyes that hadn't come from somebody's guidebook on campaign technique. The grand jury had just failed to indict Twelvetrees for Jaffe's death, a verdict that would be talked about as long as any witness survived.

People believed what they saw with their own eyes even when they *didn't* see it; and what Twelvetrees testified in his own defense, and what was corroborated by those who stood near him when Jaffe made his attack, could be knowingly shrugged aside. They were all politicians, weren't they? When one was in trouble they all stood together.

It seemed ironic to Neves that now that he was finally free of Twelvetrees the talk had just begun. But that was one of the obligations of office that a man took with his oath, and Neves had no quarrel with the jury's verdict. He knew the truth . . . or as much of the truth as anyone would ever know.

"You kept your word," Twelvetrees said.

"I always intend to," Neves answered, "and my oath."

The big man scowled but he didn't argue. "I'll admit I was worried," he added. "It was hard to convince the jury that I was trying to break loose from Jaffe instead of what all those people thought they saw . . . and only because of the way he kept screaming at me to let go. Let go! I thought he was trying to pull me out of the window with him! Then suddenly he just let loose of my lapels and threw himself backwards."

No matter how many times he told the story, Twelvetrees shuddered.

"If the jury had listened to that tape recording I'd be finished," he said.

So far as Neves was concerned, Twelvetrees was finished anyway . . . and looked it. The weight he'd lost these past few weeks had made him flabby and grotesque, but it was the power he'd lost that made him haggard. It was a simple trade: a set of photographic plates and canceled checks in exchange for one incriminating tape recording. That was the way Jaffe had shrewdly mapped it out.

"What I can't understand," Twelvetrees muttered, "is how you knew about that recorder in Jaffe's desk."

"He told me," Neves said. "A special delivery letter was waiting for me when I got home that day. He must have mailed it on his way to City Hall. In it was the key to his office and a few instructions. It was easy to see then what he had in mind."

"The crazy fool! After beating himself up twice he actually staged his own murder just to get even with me! And why? I hardly knew the man. He was nothing but a drunken bum!"

Twelvetrees' fury was a little transparent. It was bad enough to be crossed, but to be crossed by a nobody . . .

"A drunken bum!" he repeated. "Have you heard of his famous last words, Neves? He was still alive when the first man reached him, and with his dying breath he asked for another drink!"

The fat man's chuckle was Jaffe's epitaph.

"And that was the only time in his life he asked for anything so mild as sherry—anything one half as mild!"

in line of duty

by . . . Thomas Walsh

Not even the tabloids blamed him for what had happened. But a good brave cop just had to have a super-sensitive conscience.

IT WAS a few minutes past eleven, on a quiet and cold November night, when McGarvey first saw the squad car. Then it was rolling slowly down the side street—in service, but obviously not on any call, so that McGarvey glanced at it, eyed its two uniformed riders and forgot it as soon as it had passed. Margaret, who noticed it too, made the only remark about it. Wasn't it nice, she said, that he was in plain clothes now, and working days instead of nights, with a promotion, and a raise, and everything they'd been wanting so much these past few months?

"Nice?" McGarvey demanded, looking down at her with his homely grin. "A step on, maybe —I'll say that. But not—"

"But not the end of the line," she ended for him, dark eyes demurely bright. "I musn't forget that. It's to be the Commissioner, isn't it? The Commissioner and Mrs. McGarvey. Or would it be Mr. and Mrs. Commissioner McGarvey?"

"You and me anyway," McGarvey told her, his fingers tight-

The detective stories of Thomas Walsh are as celebrated as the distinguished critics who have praised them over the past decade. A frequent contributor to COLLIER'S *and the* POST, *Mr. Walsh has seldom written a more warmly human story than this about a police officer's difficult dilemma.*

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ening a moment on her arm. They were in the vestibule of her apartment house then, and McGarvey kissed her once or twice, and maybe three times, before she got out her key. No, he told her there, he wouldn't go upstairs; her old man would be sitting around now, waiting to talk war again, and once they started they'd be good for hours.

So, at the foot of the stairs, he kissed her once more—good night, that was—and rubbed his jaw lightly against her soft cheek, rose-flushed by the cold night air.

"Good night, Mr. Commissioner," she called, softly and happily, from the first landing, while he raised his fist and shook it at her threateningly from below.

When she was gone, when he had heard her apartment door open and close, he grinned a moment, happily too, to himself, and after that, with his hatbrim pulled down low against the sharp November wind, he went out to the vestibule and down the short stoop to the street.

The squad car had rounded the avenue corner long since; he did not look for it particularly. In fact, two blocks down along the avenue, he almost failed to notice it. It was parked in close to the curb, hidden halfway up by a line of ash cans, with the motor cut off, the lights out and nobody at all inside.

McGarvey was no stickler for rules, and he knew how long that last hour on duty could be. You wanted a smoke, or a quick coffee, or perhaps just a chance to stretch your legs.

But McGarvey and the men he worked with had always split those things up one at a time. The sensible way, not risking anything, never going so far from the car that a honk on the horn wouldn't bring them racing back. Something like this, no one at all around—

McGarvey didn't like it. He went over to the car, peered in, and then looked around with his gray eyes puzzled and more than a little bit angry. Some doors off, breast high in the dim yellow darkness of a doorway, he made out the brassy glitter of what might have been a shield. Briskly then, on his long legs, he bounced across the pavement and up the stoop.

"McGarvey," he grunted, and named his precinct. "What's wrong here?"

There was enough light to make out the uniformed man's face—a young face, strained and savage about the eyes. He moved fast as he heard McGarvey's steps, swinging around, his mouth twisting, his club arm starting up jerkily from his side, then stopping, rigid, at McGarvey's unexcited words.

Six years on the force then, not too long a time to forget a lot of things that didn't wash out easily, McGarvey saw that movement but pretended that he hadn't. He

knew what this rookie would be doing now—not taking care of a drunk or a holdup or a prowler, but trying to keep clear in his head all the things they'd taught him at training school, and fighting inside himself something he'd never suspected was there.

And because he knew, McGarvey might not have noticed that spasmodic and panicky movement; he just peered ahead into the hall, and gave this rookie a couple of seconds to pull himself together before he spoke again.

What was wrong?

It wasn't too clear the way the young cop's hurried whisper told it. The kid stopping them, two minutes ago, on the avenue—the kid, Tully's kid, telling them about the third-floor apartment here, and the two guys that had rented it this morning.

"Two guys?" McGarvey asked, pushing out one cheek thoughtfully with the tip of his tongue. "What guys?"

The young cop looked into McGarvey's face—then past him, up the stairs.

"Maybe," he said, "maybe Red Donlin and a pal. Tully don't have a phone, so he sent down his kid to call in; that's how he saw us." He turned to McGarvey again, his voice a little shaky with its weight of desperate earnestness.

"I'd have gone up to get him," he said. "I wanted to, McGarvey. Only Johnson—my driver—didn't want to take any chances. He said we'd better wait till we got some help from the precinct. He's out covering the back now; he set me here. That's why—"

"That's right," McGarvey said. "Johnson used his head."

His eyes, his whole face, were uglier now than Margaret had ever seen them; two harsh lines deepened about the corners of his mouth. He'd heard about men like Red Donlin—cop killers, the papers called them. Twisted, insane maybe—but with a maniac's singleness of purpose, a madman's undying hate.

Lately the papers had printed a lot about Red Donlin—stories that a cop had killed his father, that a cop had smashed his withered arm years ago, when he'd been no more than a boy—stories, even, that his father had been a cop who mistreated him.

McGarvey didn't know which of those stories was true. Just now he didn't care much. Red Donlin was somewhere upstairs, and since summer Red Donlin had killed three cops. So all he said was, "Okay. Stay put now," edging the rookie away from him, and stepping through into the hall.

There was something more the rookie should have told him—something that an older or a calmer man would never have forgotten. That Tully, who'd sent his kid down to get them, was somewhere up there now—Charlie Tully of a headquarters detail, who

lived in the house next door, and who'd heard from a talkative janitor of the new tenant he had—a red-haired man with blazing blue eyes, and a queer left arm glimpsed briefly under his coat.

But the young cop didn't tell him that, and McGarvey had no reason to ask. Tully was a name to him, nothing more—a guy the young cop knew, who lived in the neighborhood.

McGarvey forget it entirely as he moved up the stairs, quietly and carefully, around the first landing, up to the second, stopping for a moment there before he moved on to the third.

The bulb on the third landing was switched on; it showed McGarvey that the door three steps away from him was half ajar, and that there was no light at all behind it. No sound, either; only a radio humming faintly below, thin and fantastic, a wailing curl of sound tightening like a spring in his ears.

He moved toward the door; he came to it and listened again; he pushed quietly in. He saw two windows against the back wall of the kitchen; he saw the white shadow of a sink, and the formless dark bulk of a gas range. Nothing else. No movement. No—

"Red!" somebody yelled, in the shadows of a room off the kitchen. "Cops, Red! Look out! Watch—"

McGarvey took it for a warning. He was right. But how could he know then that it wasn't meant for anybody there? A scuffle of movement came fast after it—then the impression, rather than the sight, of a quick rush through the shadows. A white shirt front moved at him; a gun glittered before it.

"Get 'em up," a voice said. "Get 'em up, you—"

McGarvey didn't get them up; his own gun was shadowed by his body against the windows. He thought one thing: Red Donlin didn't know he had it out. He did one thing, the only thing he could do; he fired with his gun almost against that rushing body.

He'd heard somewhere that a bullet didn't stop a running man. This one did. McGarvey heard him crash down flat—heard him cough, and move a little, and start to draw a breath that stopped before he had it in.

Then McGarvey was against the side wall, waiting for the one who was still inside, listening to the short, flat crackle of sound that rolled and echoed between the walls, to the feet that were pounding upward on him on the stairs.

The feet belonged to the white-faced rookie; McGarvey had known that they did the moment he heard them.

"Careful," he said, "there's another one inside," before he moved around the man on the floor. He expected a shot when he went through that inner doorway. None came.

He understood why when he

tripped forward over an outthrust leg that received the momentum of his body as dully as a chunk of wood. Out, McGarvey thought—out cold. Who had conked him from the time he yelled?

The rookie had the lights on then, like a fool, before he knew what was going on inside. McGarvey grabbed the limp man's ankle and dragged him out to the kitchen. The rookie was on his knees there; McGarvey looked over his shoulder.

"That ain't Red Donlin," he said. Sweat was shining in his brow; he wiped it off with an impatient hand.

"No," the rookie said. His voice was as soft as a girl's. He must have been thinking then about what he should have told McGarvey, down there, three minutes ago, in the hall. "It's Charlie Tully," he said, his face turned from McGarvey, his hand opening and clenching, aimlessly, on the dirty oilcloth floor.

"He was—he was a headquarters man, McGarvey. He lived next door here. I thought you knew him. I thought you'd meet him on the stairs. I thought—"

"Charlie Tully?" McGarvey said. What was—He dropped the ankle he was holding, and came out a step more. This rookie was off his head. Talking like—

"He's dead," the rookie said, looking at McGarvey now, his eyes sick and desperate. "And I killed him, McGarvey. If I'd told you—"

The radio was quiet now. It made the stillness deep and profound, a great soft weight of cotton wrapped thick around McGarvey's heart and over his lungs. He said something to the rookie: What in hell was he talking about? What in hell was he—

The rookie's partner came in; a couple of minutes afterward there were some precinct men around that McGarvey knew. There were some people crowded in the doorway, and presently a woman and a boy came past them. The boy would be Tully's boy; the woman would be Tully's wife.

Some of the men formed around McGarvey and tried to get him out, but he pulled away from their hands, their words buzzed uncomprehended in his ears. The boy was crying. His mother knelt by the dead man, and took his head in her lap. There was a stillness in her face—something remote and untouched there.

McGarvey wanted to go over to her, to explain how it was; it seemed to him then that if he could only talk to her about it, go over it all slowly and clearly in his mind, it would all be straightened out. A mistake; that was all. It had happened so fast. Donlin, Charlie Tully, the guy yelling out, the white-faced rookie—

He was down on the street again; Ed Furey wouldn't let go of his arm.

"—happened to any of us." Ed Furey was saying. "You see that, Mac, don't you? I'd have done what you did up there. Any of us would."

"Sure you would," McGarvey said. "Sure you—" His voice didn't break, but it came out of his throat thickly without any tone. Only they hadn't done it—he saw that even then. It was McGarvey who—

He stopped by the area railing and wound his big hands around the top piece.

"Why don't they get a doctor?" he asked Ed Furey harshly. "Ain't they gonna do anything for him? He can't lie there like that. Get some oxygen, see? Get that stuff they shoot into your heart. Ed," he whispered. "Ed! Can't they—"

"Take it easy," Ed Furey said. "Tully's—Tully's dead."

The tabloids gave it the most space. They had pictures of the funeral, and pictures of Charlie Tully's wife and kids, and a flash of McGarvey coming unshaven and gaunt down the precinct steps the morning after it happened. But not even the tabloids blamed McGarvey directly.

It was a sad thing, but no one was to blame. Not Charlie Tully, who had gone in first to the apartment, who had subdued Red Donlin's friend, and waited then for Red Donlin to come back. Not McGarvey, who came in after, so that the man with Tully cried out to warn him, thinking he was Donlin back at last with the beer or the cigarettes he'd gone out to get. Not the rookie—the papers found out nothing about him. Not even, in any physical way, Red Donlin, for he'd never been there at all.

The squad cars had warned him off in time when he was coming back, a minute or ten after it happened. In the darkness, just a shirt front, McGarvey had seen the man rush at him; McGarvey had seen the gun too. So McGarvey, a good cop and a brave one, had done the thing that anybody else on the force would have done with a man like Red Dolin. McGarvey had . . .

It was strange the way his own thoughts always stopped there—automatically, as if they were on a track blocked off by endless empty space. He would listen to the men who tried, awkwardly perhaps, to comfort him—he would listen and say sure, sure. The only thing.

Anybody would have— Sure, sure. He wouldn't let this get him down. But inside him, even while he spoke, the thoughts kept on. Not anybody; McGarvey. No gun-shy civilian; no raw-nerved rookie. McGarvey. A good cop. A brave one. But McGarvey, all the same. . . .

It was Margaret, and Margaret alone, who never tried to comfort him—who never, in fact, mentioned Charlie Tully to him at all. They went to the movies that night where McGarvey laughed when she did and got up when she

did, and said he'd enjoyed that picture all right. For three hours he did not have to grin and nod, and say sure, sure. Tough luck all right. But anybody—

The three hours didn't help much. He found that out as soon as he started to walk home with her. He walked very slowly; long before they came to her corner his legs began to feel heavy and numb.

In that house down the street—that house he could see if he'd only raise his eyes—Charlie Tully's wife would be sitting in her silent kitchen, with her hands folded in her lap, and nothing much in her eyes. Thinking there—of what? Of a man named McGarvey, and of what he had done to her. And hating him no matter how deep she had it hidden, no matter how mute she kept the words within her.

When they had reached the El station he must have made some sound or movement. Margaret gave him a swift glance.

"There's a train coming now," she said. "Why don't you catch it, Bernie? I'll get home all right without you. It's only a step from here. And you'll be home a half-hour earlier."

McGarvey looked at her dully, seeing that she knew then, although she'd never spoken.

"All right," he said. "Maybe I will. I'll call you tomorrow."

Halfway up the stairs, he stopped to watch her cross the street. Why hadn't she spoken Charlie Tully's name? Because she was closer to him than the others—because something of what he felt she'd have, too, in her heart? Because she heard the voices, the scornful and contemptuous voices that whispered so softly, so secretly, in McGarvey's head?

Yella, those voices said; as soon as he listened they came clear. The cop that killed a cop. Jumpy, see? With a tough guy facing him. Letting fly at the first thing he saw. Drunk, maybe—who knows? Don't cops get away with murder? Don't they—

The next day he didn't call her; he even changed his boarding-house so that she couldn't get in touch with him if she tried. The voices made it all clear. She could have her pick of guys—someone who could start her clean, no shadow in his eyes, no darkness in his thoughts. Not anybody, then, like McGarvey.

He wrote her a long and rambling letter that night—he didn't love her, he'd never loved her. And he'd met another girl now—someone he was mad about. So—would she call it quits? Would she just forget him and try not to feel bad? Affectionately, he signed it—but not how much, not how little. That would be locked forever in McGarvey's heart.

Nights after that he took to hanging around the precinct—no place to go, nothing he could think

of to do. In a little room off the one where the men had their lockers he would sit and smoke for hours, thumbing a paper, staring, sometimes, at the wall.

He was there one evening when the day shift went off duty—young patrolmen, most of them, boisterous and full of horseplay. He could pick them out by their voices: Kivlin. Dolan. Fireball Kelly with his shaggy red head. Muldoon. Ed Ward. MacNamara—

He heard a flat thud, and Fireball Kelly's yell of rage.

"Who in hell let that shoe fly?" his deep voice roared. "MacNamara, you weasel—"

"Me?" said MacNamara. "Not me, Fireball. Honest!"

McGarvey smiled faintly. Good guys. Guys he liked. Guys that—

Surly Muldoon said: "Maybe he took you for Red Donlin, with that head of yours. If McGarvey was around—"

There was an abrupt silence—complete and dead. McGarvey could see it happening: someone pointing to the little room, someone shaping McGarvey's name with his lips. Nix, fellas. In there. Careful. Don't—

He was shaking slightly; he couldn't seem to stop himself. In there. He saw it now. Off by himself, McGarvey. Out of bounds. So far out that he could never get back. They talked to him; they were friendly and nice; but always, in their hearts, there'd be something they'd never, ever forget.

He went out blindly; in a tavern on the corner he tried to get drunk. He didn't know why he couldn't; three drinks changed nothing in his head.

In his room, lying on the bed with his lights out, he heard the shots again, he felt the kick of the gun in his hand. The dark kitchen was around him, Charlie Tully was sprawled at his feet. McGarvey—Charlie Tully's voice, pitiless and lost: "Why did you kill me, McGarvey? Didn't you see, didn't you know, didn't you feel—"

Someone opened the door; someone turned the lights on. McGarvey lay still, his arm across his eyes. Ed Furey's voice said quietly:

"Hello, Mac. I hoped I'd find you here. We heard of a blonde Red Donlin's gone for; someone tipped the inspector on her yesterday. Ever since we've been wired in on her phone. She got a call tonight, from a drugstore pay station three blocks down the avenue here. From Donlin. She's gonna pick up some beer and some sandwiches and be at his hide-out by half past eleven."

McGarvey did not move at all; he did not answer.

"We'll follow her there," Ed Furey said. "We'll bust in when the party's started. The inspector and me—the inspector and me thought you'd like to be along.

At the blowoff, Mac. We figured—"

"What?" McGarvey asked. His voice was savage and low, muffled under his arm: "That it's gonna bring Charlie Tully back to life?"

"Mac, Mac," Ed Furey mumbled uneasily. "That's over. That's done with. Can't you understand it yet?"

"Who'd go in ahead of me?" McGarvey said, swinging upright suddenly, his eyes shining darkly, his lips not moving much. "Who'd go in with me?"

Ed Furey looked troubled. "Who wouldn't? What's goin' on in that crazy head of yours?"

"A lot," McGarvey said. "A lot I guess I ain't supposed to know. A lot maybe I ain't smart enough to figure out. The names they call me when I ain't around —they're in my head, see? The things they—"

He stopped, his mouth gray. "The way you feel, Furey—that it's swell to be a cop. To be hard-boiled and tough and tell people off. Only for me it ain't like that any more. Because McGarvey's out now; because McGarvey's blackballed. Because he's nothin' at all but the jumpy yella rat that didn't hold his shot."

"Mac—" Ed Furey's voice was hard and angry as his own. "That's not true. It never was. There ain't a man—"

"Listen," McGarvey said, from that gray, rigid mouth. "You'll get the hell out of here, Furey. You'll tell them what they can do with their lousy tin-cop job. Maybe I was supposed to beg for it—get down on my knees and bawl and holler. Take me in, boys—"

"Will you listen to me, Mac? Will you?"

"Tell 'em all this," McGarvey said. "The inspector, see—all my pals. Yeah." He threw back his head and laughed with his mouth wide open. "Tell all the guys that went to bat for me. Tell 'em the yella belly's through. Tell 'em—"

He picked up Ed Furey's hat and sailed it across the bed with all his strength.

"Tell 'em they don't have to keep it quiet now. They can speak it right out loud—they can yell it in the streets like they want to. Like I've seen it in their rotten, shifty eyes. Tell 'em goodby for me—McGarvey, see? Who had more guts—"

Ed Furey picked up his hat. He went out quietly, without trying to speak again. When he was gone McGarvey switched off the lights again, and sat down on the bed, with that savage, senseless fury burning and throbbing in all his veins.

He sat there for a long time, moving suddenly now and again, breathing a word that choked in his throat; he got up at last, an hour after Ed Furey had gone, with the naked, pushing energy of it uncontrollable in him.

Downstairs he looked at the clock in the hall. Ten after eleven.

Twenty minutes before— He shut his mind to that, taking his hat and coat from the rack, yanking the front door back against the wall.

He could feel the cold air—he thought he'd never feel anything again. Thin and dry; a smell of coming snow in it. A cab before the stoop. He could ride in that—anywhere, everywhere. He could—

"Wait," he said. "I—"

He was out on the stoop before he recognized the first of the women who got out of the cab: Margaret. She stopped below, her eyes searching his face, whispering, "Hello, Bernie," from lips that might have been as colorless as his own.

He seemed to know at once, even before he looked, the name of the woman who was with her; and he stepped back quickly, his head safe in the shadows of the hall, so that, even if she saw him there, even if she spoke his name, Charlie Tully's wife would never see his eyes.

"Ed Furey called me up just now," Margaret said, her eyes never leaving him. "He said you were like a crazy man. That you —Bernie! Do you think I believed that letter? Do you think I was such a fool—"

He stood above her in the hall, trying to pretend that her words had nothing to do with him, that he was some place far off, and not here in body at all.

"Bernie, Bernie," she whispered; her lips trembled—"you're not going to be a fool. I won't let you. You won't speak; you can't. There's no way to defend yourself. I knew you'd do this; I knew it. That's why Mrs. Tully came with me to see you."

McGarvey tried to keep his body rigid there, but he couldn't. A shiver rippled over it and distorted the white lines of his mouth. Mrs. Tully looked up at him, her face shadowed too.

"Go on," McGarvey said. He could stare back at her now; it was as if this was the thing he had wanted, all that week, behind his maddened thoughts.

"Go on and speak, Mrs. Tully. Tell her"—his voice shook; he was past caring now—"tell her what you got in your heart for me. What I know you got there. The way you hate me, see? The way maybe you pray to God I'll get what I gave him. At night when you're thinkin' of him, when you're thinkin' of me—

"That's what you're gonna tell us now," he whispered. "Not lies, Mrs. Tully. They don't help. Because I got the truth in me, see? I got it speakin' to me all the time in my head—tonight and tomorrow and all the days of my life. It goes on happenin' there over and over—seein' him come at me, watchin' him fall, hearin' the noise he made when he died. And thinkin', thinkin', thinkin', if I'd only said a word—"

He took her arm; his fingers must have hurt it.

"Tell me that," he said, softly, painfully, wanting to hear it now, to have it finally, and irrevocably, before him in words. In her plain words, he breathed forth, in that confused and vehement whisper. Words that he would remember —words like letters of fire in his mind. The thoughts she had, the hate she had, when she remembered a cop named McGarvey, and the thing he had done to her —that was what he had to have now. That was what she had to tell him.

She looked up at him quietly, and she said: "What would I tell you? That it's hurt you more than Tully—more than me? I see that in you now. It's a thing I've pity for. Not hate."

"No," McGarvey said thickly. "Listen—"

Her mouth shook a little, tenderly. "Don't I remember Tully like you?" she said. "Long ago, the year I met him. A cop, he said he was, but I'd not believed that on his oath. We all used to smile at him—the lord mayor, my brother Joe would call him. Because that's the way he looked at you, young and strong, and as proud as Punch.

"Tully the cop—that's how I came to think of him. Is Tully the cop here yet? I'd ask them, running in from work. The fella with a laugh that'd shake the house. And my brother Joe—"

Her voice caught there. Her smile, which quivered and broke, was something McGarvey couldn't watch.

"And when we married I didn't like his work. I tried and I tried to get him away from it, because of the fear that was always in me. He'd never listen. 'Will you not be foolish now?' he'd say to me. And I cried to myself, but I talked to him no more about it. For I saw what it was. Tully the cop—that was the thing he was proud of. He'd not hate you. He'd say: go on, man. Will you not be foolish now? Will you not—"

McGarvey saw what shone in her eyes; he pushed by her dumbly, across the pavement to the cab. Margaret hurried after him and jumped into the cab with him. He mumbled something to the driver—the precinct house, because it was the first thing that came into his head.

And when they started off he sat back with his eyes closed, her face fixed in his mind, knowing he was lost forever, no way out, no path back for McGarvey. Her voice still rang, high and faint, intolerable, in his ears. Tully the cop—what did it mean? Lies! Lies! Like the things they all said to McGarvey. Nothing true. Trying to make him think—

And yet, obscurely, with a life of their own, they moved inside him, they would not let him be. McGarvey the cop—he used to think of himself that way, too.

Funny. A cop was nothing great at all. Only for him and for Tully, it had been the one thing in their heads.

He could remember a very young McGarvey, a kid in school, hanging around the precinct house, looking at the plain-clothes man and the desk sergeant inside, knowing that there was the thing he wanted to do, and nothing was going to change him ever.

And he could remember an older McGarvey, McGarvey the rookie, walking his first beat with bubbles in his blood, and something in his heart he was never going to lose.

He'd lost that now. Why? He'd have died as Tully had, if Tully had shot first. But McGarvey the cop would have had no squawk. You paid for what you wanted. Tully the cop had paid all he had; would McGarvey the cop have paid that too?

Something happened to him; he got all calm and quiet inside. Sure, he thought; why, sure. Me and Tully—we knew what it was. Nothing great; nothing noble. But all we wanted. So—so he and Tully shared it now. Not a uniform; not a way to make a living. Just—

The cab slowed suddenly. He looked through the window and saw people lined across the gutter, a row of cops holding them back. Here, McGarvey thought—of course. Hadn't Ed Furey told him that the drugstore where Donlin had placed the call was only a few blocks away?

They had him holed up here now. Donlin, the cop killer. He was sure of that at once; it was a thing that had to happen. Because whose job was it now? Whose but his and Charlie Tully's?

He and Margaret got out of the cab, and pushed through the crowd to where a group of men were gathered around Inspector Riley's bulky form. Ed Furey, looking angry and worried, was talking.

"—must have spotted us from upstairs," McGarvey heard him say. "Or maybe the girl saw our car keeping after her. Just as soon as we started across the street he blasted down at us from the window. Then he tried to duck out the back, but Kennedy and Tom Hansen headed him off. He's in there now with a couple of guys and a closet full of guns. And it's gonna be one nice, sweet job digging him out."

By moving a little McGarvey could see the house—three doors in from the corner, on the other side of the street, an old-fashioned brownstone tenement.

He had actually started ahead when Ed Furey grabbed his arm. They were waiting now for tear gas, he said; there were other tenants in there with Donlin, and the inspector would have to play it safe and easy. But there might be some way in which Red Don-

lin had failed to cover. Would McGarvey try to find it with them?

McGarvey didn't pay much attention to what Furey said, but he followed docilely enough. Across the avenue, keeping to the shelter of the El posts, and into a house on the other side of the street, on the corner, two up from Red Donlin's. He heard a couple of shots; he didn't know who was firing.

After Ed Furey and a couple of uniformed men he went into an alleyway. There he waited—tense, all on edge—while the three others reconnoitered. Then they all went down some stairs to a cellar.

They looked around there for a door that could pass them through to the next tenement. They didn't find any. McGarvey stood behind them silently in the shelter of a coalbin, everything clear in his mind. He'd lived in a house much like this as a boy; he remembered a subcellar that ran on beneath the main ones to keep them from dampness. There might be one here, too. If there were—

He found it soon after Ed Furey and the others went out to the yard—a square of wood set in the stone floor behind the furnace, smeared with a rubble of ashes.

The door came up easily enough; then, with his hands on the sides, he dropped through into the thick darkness below. He had to crouch down in that stinking darkness, four feet deep; he had to crawl forward on his hands and knees through cold slime that closed over his fingers and dragged at the outspread tails of his coat.

It was nothing he minded. Twice he struck matches, seeing by the first he was past the next house down, by the second he was under Red Donlin's. He got under the wooden scuttle there, set his shoulders against it and pushed up; he was in the cellar of the third house then, lit vaguely by the red belly of the furnace before him.

Stairs slanted up dimly against the far wall; he was moving for them when the firing began again, in a heavy blast directly over him. McGarvey reached the stairs and started up, feeling all right, solid and sure with his gun in his hand, hearing no whispers, knowing where Charlie Tully was if he was anyplace at all—around here now, so close in the shadows McGarvey might have touched him by reaching out his hand.

A door let him into the street hall. More stairs took him up, over the first flight, across the landing, to the foot of the second. A woman sobbed hysterically, somewhere behind walls; on the second landing a man with a revolver in his hand crouched under the hall window.

At first he did not see McGarvey; he raised one hand and rubbed his mouth shakily. Then, as McGarvey came on, a stair

creaked and his head turned, and he looked down at McGarvey with his hand still frozen at his mouth. He did not move for a count of three; McGarvey could see whiteness all around the pupils of his eyes. After that he was a lot too slow, a lot too clumsy, swinging his gun down. McGarvey was the only one to fire.

In a room off to the right an automatic spat four times, drowning his single report in its splattering lashes of sound. McGarvey went up fast, across the landing and into the room, under an echoing cover of shots from the street.

He saw a man lying on the floor there, twitching a little, a dark splotch-like shadow on his forehead, his eyes fixed unwinkingly on the wall across from him. Just before McGarvey fired the twitching stopped, and he saw that the dark splotch wasn't shadow, the bright stare wasn't life.

He went on—out to the hall again, forward along up. When he was halfway to the street side a door before him opened, and a narrow streak of dirty gray light shot out and widened across the banisters.

A man came out after it, cursing thickly, with a machine gun balanced across his withered left arm. His back was to McGarvey; he didn't hear his steps.

"Donlin," McGarvey said. "Donlin!"

The other man turned fast—turned and saw him standing there, ten feet away, a step out from the wall, his left arm stretched out along it.

And McGarvey looked back at him quietly, complete then, the way Charlie Tully must have been complete the night he died—everything in place, everything he needed solid inside him. Not afraid, you understand, not wanting to die; but no squawk, no kick, no hate in him.

And no excitement at all; no hurry. His job—his and Charlie Tully's. He seemed to have all the time there was to place his shots—one, two, in that last split second. The other gun swept down to him across that withered arm—stopped there, wobbled once and fell to the floor.

He took Margaret home that night, much later. He took her past the house where Tully the cop died once in line of duty, and then they stopped for a time, as they always did, outside her door.

"That letter now," McGarvey said solemnly there; "I don't know why I wrote it. It wasn't true. I just had a lot of—crazy ideas. Did you ever believe it?"

"No," she said. She straightened his tie; she gave his chin a pat, her voice low and not too steady. "Because—I guess I believed in something else, Bernie. You and me, perhaps. If that's what you want—"

McGarvey didn't answer that; he didn't have to. She could see it all there in his eyes.

park killer

by . . . Harry Widmer

The killer was in plain view, and deadly as a hooded cobra. But they could not see him for the trees.

PROSPECT PARK on this sultry Brooklyn night was the Mecca of thousands, seeking an elusive cool breeze; and it was also the Mecca of a killer seeking a release from the maggots that had taken possession of his sick brain.

Jim Dana's police cruiser swung left from Prospect Park West into the Third Street park entrance, jumped the walk and slithered across the meadow. The siren was at a low, warning growl. People stood rooted on the grass. Dana's driver expertly wove between them. It was eight fifteen and dusk was settling over the giant trees and great expanses of grass.

Where the crowd was thickest, the cruiser growled to a stop. Five green-and-white prowl cars on the walks and grass had formed a police line. In its center was one of the park's densely-treed lovers' lanes.

Jim Dana opened his leather badge carrier and displayed his gold lieutenant of detectives shield from his breast pocket. He left the cruiser and walked swiftly to

Harry Widmer is not only an accomplished writer of crime fiction. He has successfully edited a chain of mystery story magazines, and is now associated with a well-known literary agency. As might be surmised, this starkly realistic little excursion into murder is told with all the dramatic persuasiveness of an experienced craftsman in the genre. You'll like its very human understanding, and quite startling denouement.

a knot of uniformed police. The knot stiffened to respectful attention.

Dana said: "Roy Schmidt phoned in?"

A patrolman stepped forward. "Yes, Lieutenant." He nodded toward another patrolman. "Morris here stayed with the two eyewitnesses and the deceased."

Dana glanced briefly at the two witnesses. One was a girl of about twenty, dark-haired and pretty and very scared. The young man was around twenty-five, with crew-cut sandy hair, his boyish face serene and pleasant. Dana nodded to them both, then turned to his precinct detective-sergeant:

"Ryan, take over the cruising patrol. Roy Schmidt's fast report gave us the chance to seal off the park. If the killer had wings he couldn't beat our ring of radio cars. He is in the sealed territory. He's wearing a yellow tee-shirt with a black-arrow design. Get him, Ryan. Prospect Park is not going to be another Central Park."

Dana turned back to Patrolman Schmidt. "We'll look at the deceased." They walked over to a mound of newspapers spread over a body. Dana said: "Take 'em off."

Three patrolmen quickly removed the newspapers. Every man there was acutely aware of the slender, crumpled body on the stone walk. A spotlight winked on, flooding the scene.

Schmidt observed quietly: "The dress is all she's wearing, sir. She was looking for trouble."

"Maybe she was just hot," said Dana. He pulled his sticking shirt from his perspiring chest. "Hot night."

Schmidt drew in his breath. "She was beautiful, Lieutenant."

"Too beautiful to die," said Dana harshly. He bent closer to the dead girl. A bullet had entered her left eye. Her dark hair was matted to her left cheek. Dana stood up. "Kill the spot. Cover her."

The spotlight went off. Gentle, lowering dusk again fell upon the girl's body.

Schmidt pointed to the girl's wristwatch. "Robbery wasn't the motive. She also had thirty bucks in a little pocket in her dress. Cigarettes and matches. No identification."

Dana and Schmidt walked back to the two witnesses. Dana motioned the couple to a park bench. He sat down beside them. Patrolman Schmidt put a pencil flash on his notebook, said:

"This lady is Miss Louise Roberts, Lieutenant. The fellow is Bert Laidlaw. . . . This is Detective-Lieutenant Dana."

Dana asked the girl: "You saw this happen, Miss?"

The girl was twisting a little handkerchief in her fingers. "Not actually. I was sitting around the bend in the next lane. Just getting a breath of air before I went back to my room to type reports. I do

typing jobs at night. It helps to make ends meet."

"Yes," said Dana quietly. "Did you see the man who did the shooting?"

"I saw him about ten minutes before I heard the shots. I was sitting around the bend, as I said. This fellow in the yellow shirt gave me a hard time at my bench. When I didn't encourage him at all, he swore at me and went away."

Dana looked over at the young man witness. "And where were you, Mr. Laidlaw?"

"I was sitting two benches away from this young lady." He smiled at the girl. "We weren't acquainted then. I had just taken my seat when the character in the yellow shirt walked away from her bench." He tried another smile at Louise, and got a half-smile in return. "I wish I had known then that he had been bothering her." He let the inference ride.

Dana looked over the husky fellow but made no comment. "What do you do for a living, Mr. Laidlaw?" he asked.

"I'm a clerk for Gowanus Metal Cap. It's down in the Red Hook section."

"And you, Miss?" Dana turned to the girl. "You said you did typing jobs at night?"

"Yes, at night. My day-time job is a dancing hostess at the *Melody Lane* on Fulton Street." She was twisting her handkerchief again. "Matinee dancing draws a different crowd than the night shift."

Bert Laidlaw brightened. "A dancing hostess. Well, now—you can teach me a tango any time." He looked her over more closely. "Well, now—that's real nice."

Dana said brusquely: "When you finish the dance we'll get back to the murder." He nodded to Louise. "What did you do when you heard the shot?"

Louise was startled by Dana's brusqueness. "The shot—well, it seemed to come from right behind me. I jumped up and ran. The walk led around the bend to here. Suddenly I saw the girl sprawled on the walk. The fellow in the yellow shirt was standing over her."

Bert Laidlaw added: "It was the same character all right. Louise and I were standing about here. There was no mistaking the black arrow on his yellow shirt." Laidlaw whisked one palm across the other. "He took off into the trees."

Dana left the witnesses and walked over to where Patrolman Schmidt was standing. "Did you check the ground for a gun?" he asked.

"Every inch, Lieutenant. No gun. This lane here where the girl was killed is exactly parallel with the lane where Miss Roberts and Mr. Laidlaw were sitting. There's about twenty feet of trees and underbrush between the lanes. The killer could have run straight

through to the next lane and mingled with the crowd in the excitement following the shot."

Dana caught Louise's eye, beckoned her to come over. When she stood beside him, he asked: "Did you see a gun in the suspect's hand?"

"No," said Louise. "He wasn't holding a gun."

Behind Dana's back the flash bulbs went off as the police photographer took his official pictures of the deceased. In the glare of the flashes, Bert Laidlaw's eyes sought the sprawled corpse.

Dana took Louise back to Laidlaw, said: "If you both will come to headquarters, we'll take your statements."

Laidlaw shook his head. "I know what happened to the guy who fingered Willie Sutton. Not me, Mister Lieutenant."

"Then why did you come forth as a witness?"

"I just backed up Louise's statement. I did it to help the law. I identified the killer. But I'm not going to be a sitting duck for some gang of hoodlums."

"You'll get every protection," said Dana.

"I'll bet. Like Arnold Schuster got. Count me out on that statement business."

Dana looked at Louise. "And you, Miss?"

"I want to help," said Louise, "but I don't want to be killed for it."

Dana sat back and looked out at the hundreds of people now packed solid outside the cordon of prowl cars. He asked Patrolman Schmidt: "Did any other witnesses come forward?"

"No, sir. Only these two. Dozens were questioned, but no one saw anything—or so they said."

Dana faced back to Louise Roberts and Bert Laidlaw. "You can take my word for it that I won't let any harm come to you kids. I frankly need your help. The law needs your help. Tell you what I'll do. The suspect couldn't have gotten out of the park. We'll pick him up in a matter of hours."

He nodded reassuringly. "You two can stay with me at my apartment down on Third Street. I'll have the suspect brought there. You can identify him from another room. He'll never see either of you. After that, the police will take over." Dana spread his hands. "That's the size of it. Is it a deal?"

"For me," announced Bert Laidlaw, "the precautions seem okay. But I'm not sticking my neck out any farther than that." He touched Louise's shoulder. "The only reason I'm doing this is because I like a park where a fellow and a girl can sit down and be friendly."

Louise's eyes flicked over Laidlaw's thick chest and wide shoulders. "I like this park, too."

"Thanks," said Dana. "No

harm will come to either of you." Dana then called to a uniformed sergeant. "Frank, I'm taking these witnesses to my home in protective custody. I want a cruiser with three men at the door. Three in the cellar and three on the roof. All plainclothes."

"Right."

Dana got up, and put an unlighted cigarette between his lips. He watched the sanitation boys put the dead girl into a basket. Even those hardened lads handled the body with something of reverence.

The prowl-car radios were humming with business. Jim Dana walked over to the nearest car.

The cop at the wheel shook his head. "Nothing definite, Lieutenant. Twenty yellow shirts have been picked up, but no black arrows on them."

"Write this down," said Dana. When the cop flicked on his dashlight and took up the pad and pen, Dana went on: "For Bergen HQ. I'm taking witnesses to my apartment. When Detective-Sergeant Ryan picks up suspect he is to bring him there. Check a possible black arrow hoodlum club. Move in." Dana read what the cop had written, took the pen and put his initials on the paper.

Dana mopped his forehead with a handkerchief as he went back to Patrolman Schmidt. "Schmidt, tell my driver to bring my car over here."

The police cruiser, siren tomcatting a low growl, moved through the people and through the prowl-car line to come to a stop before Dana. He helped Louise into the back, motioned Laidlaw to sit with her. Then he got into the front, saying: "To my home, Wally. No siren on the streets."

Jim Dana sank back on the cushion. Prospect Park—he'd played there with his brothers since they were able to walk. He'd met his first dates there on Sundays at a merry-go-round that used to be on the meadow years ago. It was a nice park. There'd been some rough times; some tough girls and tough fights. But everyone always went home in one piece. It was *his* park. He wanted to keep it the way he had known it.

The radio came to life: "Bulletin for Lieutenant Dana. We've moved in on the Black Arrow Beaux. Union near Fourth. Seven members taken in for paraffin test."

Dana confirmed receipt of the message.

Bert Laidlaw spoke from the back seat. "Now, that's what I call first-class police work. Do you always get your man, Lieutenant?"

"I've been lucky—mostly."

"Ever have to shoot any of them, Lieutenant?"

"Some," said Dana.

Laidlaw had nothing more to say. Louise was silent.

Reflection etched harsh lines of

loneliness on Dana's face. A cop with a gun was always a person apart from other people.

The cruiser pulled up before a white-stone apartment house on Third Street. Dana saw the other police car with three men in it. That told him the cellar and roof were also covered. He got out of the car. Laidlaw gallantly assisted Louise. Wally stayed in the car.

Dana led Louise and Laidlaw up two flights of stairs to a third-floor apartment. When he stepped into his foyer he felt the soothing envelopment of cool, pleasant air. By keeping the windows in the back open and those in the front shut, he always achieved a perfect air-conditioning.

"How lovely and cool," said Louise.

Dana flicked on the foyer light. Two bookcases lined the wall. There was a long, low chest holding a telephone. On the floor was a deep-napped hunter's green rug. To the right of the foyer was a big, old-fashioned dining room. To the front, the living room. To the back, along a cool hall were the kitchen, bath and three bedrooms.

"Nice place you have here," observed Laidlaw. "Are you a bachelor?"

Dana nodded to that. "I live here with my two brothers. They're both cops. The lucky guys are on vacation now." Dana took off his jacket. His clip holster and bulldogged .38 sprang ominously into view.

Louise looked at the gun and seemed to draw within herself.

Laidlaw asked: "Ever get any medals for killing guys?"

"Never had to kill any. Never wanted to. A slug in the arm or leg usually did the job." Dana dropped his jacket on the low chest. "How's about a cold beer for you folks?"

"I'd like one very much," said Louise.

"Anything stronger?" suggested Laidlaw.

"Not while I'm on duty," said Dana. He switched on lamps in the living room. "Make yourselves to home."

Dana went into the kitchen, pulled the over-head light chain. He set up tall glasses, took beer bottles from the refrigerator and wiped them dry.

From the living room came the quick cadence of Louise's high heels. She entered the kitchen, smiled at Jim Dana, saying: "May I help?"

Dana saw that her hair was slightly mussed. He asked quietly: "Laidlaw getting ideas?"

Louise uncapped one of the beer bottles. "I guess everyone gets ideas about a dancing hostess."

Dana's hand touched hers briefly. "I appreciate what you're doing for the law and for me." His smile softened the harsh lines in his face. "You're in my home,

my guest. You won't be bothered again."

Louise's eyes dropped to the jutting butt of his gun as the quiet violence of his words echoed in her mind. She looked up into his face. "I've never felt safer in my life." Her forefinger gently tapped his gun-butt. "Why a cop?"

"That's easy, Miss. My dad was a cop. Seems to be in the Dana blood. Both my kid brothers, too. We've all worked hitches in Prospect Park. It's a grand place to us."

"Me, too, Lieutenant. My daddy first brought me there in a baby carriage. Later we went riding in the swan boats on the lake. I learned to play tennis on the grass courts."

Bert Laidlaw walked into the kitchen. "Am I busting up anything?"

"No," said Dana. "You're just in time to carry your own beer into the living room."

There was a knock on the door and a voice carrying through the panel: "This is Wally, Lieutenant."

Dana opened the door.

Wally blurted: "We got him, Lieutenant. Sergeant Ryan picked up the suspect hiding in the zoo. They're bringing him here."

Bert Laidlaw said: "Well, now —ain't that something."

When Wally left, Dana closed the door leaving the latch off. He then pointed to the dark dining room. "You two will stay in there."

He led them in and drew the drapes across the doorway separating the dining room from the foyer. "You might as well sit down," he told them. Then he stepped into the living room and closed the old-fashioned rolling doors which divided the dining room from the living room. He left just a crack between the rolling panels so that Louise and Laidlaw could see into the living room without themselves being seen.

The telephone rang. Dana went into the foyer, answered it and heard: "Lieutenant, this is Sergeant Levy. The bullet that killed the girl was from a twenty-five caliber."

"Thanks," said Dana. He went back into the living room and stood at the window looking down into the street. He saw the two police cars parked at the curb near a street light. As he looked down he saw another car pull up and park double next to a cruiser. Two men got out of the front of the third car, and three got out of the rear. One of the three wore a yellow shirt.

Dana watched them cross the sidewalk and disappear from view as they entered the building.

Presently there was a knock on the door.

Dana opened up. He saw Detective-Sergeant Ryan, the three detectives and a young fellow

handcuffed to one of them. The young fellow wore a yellow tee-shirt with a black arrow across its front. His hair was falling over his forehead and his face was chalk white.

Dana nodded to Ryan. "Good work. Come in." He led the way into the living room, asking: "Did you get the gun?"

"No sign of a gun anywhere." Ryan jerked his thumb at the prisoner. "He's innocent, he says."

Dana maneuvered the prisoner so that he faced the closed rolling doors to the dining room. Dana looked him over. He was medium-sized, angular, dark skinned. His black hair was long, sweat-matted. Dark perspiration stains were on the yellow shirt at the armpits and the neck.

One of the detectives opened a notebook. "Lieutenant, we have his name, age, where he works, his relatives, his home—"

"We'll save that for later. I just want to establish one fact now." Dana moved over to the crack between the rolling doors. He said to the group of detectives: "I have two witnesses in the next room. They heard the shot that killed the girl in the park tonight. They both saw a man standing over the dead body of the girl, and they saw this man run off into the trees. Also, one of the witnesses is a girl who claims this suspect annoyed her previous to the shooting. First, we'll hear the suspect's voice." He pointed at the prisoner. "What is your name?"

The prisoner licked his lips, mumbled: "Sam Bervasi. Mister, I didn't—"

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen, Mister."

"Repeat these words—'How's about a little fun, babe?' "

Sam Bervasi's face got whiter. He gulped, finally got it out: "H-how's about a little f-fun, b-babe." It sounded sick.

Sergeant Ryan gave a short bark of a laugh. "Ain't he the Romeo now!"

Dana turned to the crack in the rolling doors and spoke to Louise: "Miss, is this the fellow who annoyed you in the park?"

"Yes," came Louise's voice from the narrow crack.

"Is this the fellow you saw standing over the dead girl?"

"Definitely," said Louise. "I couldn't be wrong."

"Thank you, Miss. Now, let the other witness speak."

Bert Laidlaw's voice came from the crack: "He's the one, all right. And now that you've caught him, Lieutenant, I'll sign that statement. I'll go whole hog to help the law."

"Thank you," said Dana. "The law appreciates your change of heart."

Detective-Sergeant Ryan asked: "What gives, Lieutenant?"

Dana nodded toward the crack in the rolling doors. "Our male witness refused to sign a state-

ment. Now he's willing to cooperate." Dana stepped over to the rolling doors. "So, there's no further need for concealment. He slid back one of the doors.

Bert Laidlaw and Louise stood there blinking in the sudden light from the living room. Dana beckoned them in to confront the prisoner.

When the prisoner saw Louise he quickly averted his eyes. To Laidlaw he gave a blank look.

Laidlaw pointed directly at the prisoner. "That's the killer all right."

Detective-Sergeant Ryan drywashed his hands. "Well, that wraps it up." He nodded to the other detectives. "Take the prisoner to Bergen Street. Book him for murder."

"Wait a minute," said Dana. Then he turned to Bert Laidlaw. "You definitely placed the prisoner standing over the murdered girl. Was he holding a big or little gun?"

"A little gun, Lieutenant."

Louise's sharp intake of breath was audible to all. "I didn't see him holding a gun."

Dana snapped out his bulldogged .38 and thrust it into Laidlaw's stomach. "Blink an eyelash and I'll blast you."

Bert Laidlaw's smile of confidence fled, leaving his face a dirty gray.

Dana told Ryan: "Cuff his hands behind his back, then fan him."

While Sam Bervasi, the detectives and Louise looked on in amazement, Ryan said:

"He's got a gun in his slacks' pocket."

"Slit the pocket," ordered Dana. "Put a pencil through the trigger guard or into the muzzle."

When Ryan gingerly lifted the little gun from Laidlaw's slit pocket, Dana pushed Laidlaw down into a chair.

Laidlaw's eyes narrowed on Louise. "You'd be just like the other one. You'd kiss a guy—then push him away. You lousy dancing tramp, you'd—"

Dana jerked Laidlaw out of the chair, shoved him toward one of the detectives. "Don't rough him. He's as sick as a man can be. Get him out of here."

Ryan left with Laidlaw and two detectives. The other detective, still handcuffed to Sam Bervasi, asked: "What about this lad, Lieutenant?"

"Let him go," Dana said. "But if he's ever brought in again, let me know personally."

When they left, Louise said: "I almost sent an innocent man to the electric chair."

Dana spread his hands, shrugged. "Almost," he agreed. "That's an eye-witness for you. Forget about it. You only tried to help."

"You were wonderful," said Louise simply.

"Just a cop's job of remembering facts. We were alone in the

park when you said that the suspect had no gun. Laidlaw didn't hear you say that. The phone call I got a while ago told me it was a little gun. Only our lab—and the killer—knew that. Laidlaw's change of heart and over-confidence wasn't natural." Dana shrugged again. "Just a cop's job."

Dana slipped into his jacket. "We'll have to go over to Bergen Street and make statements. After that, I'll be off duty. Maybe by then we both could use a couple of good drinks."

Louise pondered that. "I could —but by then it would be time for my dancing job."

Dana's smile was tentative. "I could raid the joint, bail you out —and you'd have the day off."

Louise's smile was warm and friendly. "I think I'll like knowing a cop. They're so considerate and resourceful."

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portrait of murder

by . . . George Harmon Coxe

When the bulbs popped Casey was in the front row with his camera. But he never thought he'd be right onstage, spotlighted for death.

CASEY PAID his check and lingered at the cashier's counter, soaking up the welcome warmth of the restaurant. He took his time about buttoning his ulster, staring out through the glass door on which inverted gilt-painted letters spelled: *Joe's Place*. Outside, the street was dark, bleak, windswept under the elevated structure.

A thick-bodied uniformed policeman, enormous in the long winter coat, trudged into sight and sought refuge from the wind in the recessed doorway. Facing the street, he began to shift his weight from one foot to another in a stamping sequence.

With weary, reluctant exhalation, Casey snapped up his coat collar, picked up his camera and bulky plate-case. He shouldered through the door and stopped beside the policeman, whose pink, heavy-jowled face cracked in a grin of recognition.

"Well," he croaked, "if it ain't the Flashgun!"

Casey said, "Hi, Ansell." He

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hesitated, grinned and said, "Boy, is your face red!"

"It oughta be," Ansell growled. "It's ten below."

"Can't you grab yourself any heat on this beat?"

"Sure." Ansell said. "There's places. Like this one. But I get myself some heat, that's the time the skipper comes by doin' some snoopin'." Ansell sighed, shook his head. "Nights like this a fella should be home with his missus, if he's got one. Now if only I had a job like yours—"

"Yeah, if only *you* had it, not me." The smile fled from Casey's eyes, left them somber, brooding. He stared out across the street at the blackened, hollow-eyed windows of a plumbing shop opposite. A sheet of newspaper skimmed down the pavement on a gust of wind and plastered itself against an elevated upright. Light from *Joe's Place* and from the corner drug-store fifty yards away burnished scattered icy patches on the pavement, the residue of the first snowfall.

"Sometimes," Casey groused, "I think I ought to have my head examined. A guy that puts up with the grief on this job, is nuts. No sleep, no time you can call your own. Rub elbows with Mr. Pneumonia and his pal Influenza, and wait for the old rheumatism to catch up with you. Get round-shouldered sluggin' a plate-case, flat feet from pounding the pavement."

"Aw," said Ansell, "you eat it up."

"Know where I've been?" Casey challenged, ignoring Ansell's comment. "Down on the waterfront where the wind's right in from Labrador. And all because some stinking fishing tub picked tonight to catch on fire. But—" Casey's voice took on an unconscious undertone of satisfaction and his eyes sparkled—"I got some swell pictures."

The door opened behind them and a quartet of young people sauntered out into the entryway. They were all in evening clothes, apparently on their way home from a party. Laughing, oblivious to the cold, they came into the night with coats open, strolled across the pavement to a small sedan parked ahead of Casey's roadster.

"That's the way it goes," Ansell grumbled. "Look at 'em. Us freezin' to death and them—home's the last place *they* want to go."

A squeal of tires and the roar of a gunned-up motor checked the crack at the tip of Casey's tongue. He glanced left as a heavy black sedan careened around the corner, skidded briefly on an icy patch, then straightened with a lurch and sped in between the El pillars, heading uptown.

Ansell took a step towards the sidewalk, saying, "Them guys is—"

The sedan raced past *Joe's*

Place. Casey stiffened, caught his breath, as the little sedan with its quartet of young people pulled out sharply from the curb and into the path of the speeding car.

The warning blast from a two-toned horn ripped through the night. The heavy sedan swerved left, skidded. The tip of its rear fender grazed the edge of an elevated upright. The car yawed crazily, bounced from the next steel support; spinning in a half turn, it shot diagonally across the street and crashed solidly against a steel light pole on the curb.

Crunching metal and shattering glass made a nightmare of sound. A tire blew out like the report of a gun. Then silence. The little sedan, which had kept right on moving as though afraid of the consequences, rounded the next corner, slipped from sight.

Ansell said, "Gawd!" and stepped from the curb.

Casey exhaled, became conscious of the tension that had held him taut-muscled for those two interminable seconds. Reaching for his plate-case, he said to himself: "Looks like I get another picture."

Quickly he unstrapped the case, took out a flashbulb. He opened the camera, began to screw the bulb into the synchronized flashgun.

Ansell said, "Hey," angrily.

Casey glanced up, saw two men, vague, indistinct figures in the shadows, backing away from the wreck. Then, suddenly, they turned and broke into a fast run.

"Oh, hit and run, huh?" Ansell muttered, and sprinted after the two men.

Casey stood still until he had adjusted the aperture and focus. When he looked up again the two men were fifty yards away and Ansell, about ten yards behind, was chasing them down the opposite sidewalk.

Casey's move was automatic, the result of long training in making quick decisions. He had intended to get a picture of the wreck, another of the victims, if any. Now he saw a chance for something better—a shot of Ansell making the pinch . . .

Rather than take up a stern chase lugging a plate-case, he leaped for his roadster. The motor was warm, caught immediately. The wheels spun, found traction and he went forward in second.

Ansell caught his men. Casey saw them standing in the middle of the next block, close to the wall of a darkened building. He angled the roadster near the curb, within camera range.

Because of the shadowy blackness of the sidewalk area, he could not distinguish faces. He did not know anything was wrong until he leaned out under the top braces and set the camera to his shoulder. Even then it was a command rather than any visible action that warned him.

A thick voice snarled, "Reach, copper, or you get it!"

In the fraction of a second Casey understood. Ansell, thinking he was up against a couple of kids who had stolen a car for a joy ride, had not drawn his gun. Now it was clear that he was up against something more than joyriders.

There was time for Casey to forget his picture, get clear of trouble. But he did not take his chance. Perhaps it was because this was the sort of set-up that news photographers pray for and seldom get. Maybe it was because he knew a gun was held on Ansell and that if he got a picture of them and escaped these men would not dare shoot. Whatever the reason, Casey ignored or forgot his position, and did what he always did when he got the chance —he pressed the shutter release.

From that instant until he stepped on the accelerator was less than a second. But it was long enough to get the menacing tableau on film with a fleeting burst of blue-white light from the flashbulb.

Ansell had his hands up, an automatic pointed at his stomach. Holding the gun was a tall thin man with a black coat and a light gray felt hat that looked bloody. A thick-set fellow was behind Ansell, his right hand withdrawing the policeman's service revolver from under the blue uniform coat; the left hand clubbing a heavy automatic down on Ansell's head.

The shot of the tableau told the whole story. Casey's nerves stretched taut and he felt his scalp prickle. He heard one of the men curse as he shoved the gearshift lever into second. His foot slapped against the accelerator. Above the roar of his motor a voice yelled: "Hold it!"

Casey held his breath and hunched low. Then his luck ran out . . . The rear wheels spun futilely on ice. The car shuddered, the rear end slipped gently sidewise. Casey eased the throttle. The car inched forward. Then a gun roared and a slug cut into the seat behind him.

"Grab air!" a voice snarled.

Casey jerked his head around. The tall man was less than ten feet from the roadster, gun leveled. Casey let go of the wheel and pushed up his hands.

The tall man told Casey to shove over, slid behind the wheel. The thick-set fellow, pushed in on the other side of Casey and rammed a gun in Casey's side. As his partner coaxed the roadster into the middle of the street and settled himself on the seat, the fellow said: "A smarty, huh?"

Those were the only words spoken for ten minutes. The tall man drove skillfully, concentrated on his job. The thick-set fellow kept the pressure of his gun constant and watched Casey.

For a while Casey kept track of his surroundings as the roadster took a roundabout course back towards the business section

of the city. When they rolled past the North Station he looked for a policeman or a cruising radio car, cursed inwardly when they sped past the deserted but light swept area without so much as sighting a patrolman. Then they slid into a darkened side street and he gave in to the hopelessness of his position.

He was all over being scared. He was keyed-up, tense, but he was philosophical about it. Whatever came now there was nothing he could do but take it. He'd got himself in the jam, and he was a sap for doing it. Why the hell couldn't he be satisfied to take it easy once in a while? He had filled his assignment on the fishing boat fire, and had some swell shots . . .

Casey grunted aloud and the thick-set man nudged him with the gun and said, "Shut up!"

Casey, still busy with his thoughts, was only vaguely aware of this interruption . . . But no, he'd wanted an action picture. The best, the unusual. And what did it get him? What did it always get him? Grief. But what the hell. He didn't get his reputation from snapping pictures of the obvious. Anybody can do that. Trouble and exclusive pictures went hand in hand. If you wanted one you had to take the other, and you couldn't score any runs asking people to pose for you. This time —well, the odds caught up with him. Anyway, Ansell didn't get gunned out and—

"This okey, Dutch?"

The tall man's brusque voice snapped Casey's thoughts back to realities. He glanced around. The car was slowing down in the middle of a darkened block lined with four and five-story buildings. Oliver Street, he thought. Some place in the downtown section that, teeming with activity from nine-to-five, was thoroughly abandoned at this hour.

"Why not?" Dutch grinned.

The roadster stopped two feet from the curb and Dutch opened his door, holding the automatic close to Casey's head.

"This is where you get out, chump," he said.

Casey took a deep breath. He glanced at the tall man, saw the blood on the side of his face. Then he shoved over on the seat as Dutch backed to the pavement and stood waiting for him to hit the pavement.

"If you want that plate," Casey said thickly, "it's in the back of my camera. Leave the camera and the plate-case where I can find 'em will you?"

"Sure," Dutch sneered. "We'll leave 'em right in your car." His voice thinned out. "Come on. Out."

Casey stepped to the pavement, and in the middle of the step Dutch swung the automatic. Casey ducked, tried to draw back. But he moved too late. Something

crashed behind his ear and pain exploded in his head, bringing complete blackness and a fleeting sense of falling.

The next thing Casey was conscious of was a gnawing and relentless throbbing inside his head. Then came the sensation of being lifted, of riding on a bed. Voices thin and far away penetrated his consciousness.

"You can't get him in if you don't lift him up."

"Yeah, but this guy is heavy."

Casey made the effort, opened his eyes, saw that he was on a stretcher which tipped precariously as an interne at the foot struggled with the handles.

Casey lifted his head, and as pain expanded in his brain, said, "Hey!" The word hurt as much as lifting his head but it had the desired effect. The interne gaped at him. The stretcher steadied.

"Put me down," Casey ordered weakly. "I'm okay."

"The hell you are," the interne countered. "You got a concussion, fella."

"So what," Casey said. "Put me down."

The interne sighed. "Put him down, Eddy."

The stretcher came down to the sidewalk. Casey sat erect, shut his eyes when the walk began to wobble. An arm helped steady him until his head stopped spinning. The interne said, "It's no skin off my nose, fella. But you got a real sock."

Casey began to talk, to fight a new nausea in his stomach.

"Where's my camera and my car?"

"What car?"

Casey opened his eyes. Slowly, and in spite of his throbbing head, he turned around. A gleaming white ambulance stood at the curb. The two internes were watching him; so were a half dozen curious-eyed men who, poorly dressed and unshaven, looked like bums on an all-night prowl.

"All I know is we got a call," the interne said, "and we came down and found you draped over the curb with a lump on your head and a gash on your face."

"Help me up," he ordered. "I'm okay." He tried to get up alone and his knees weakened and let him down.

"That's what you think," the interne said. "Come on, don't be a sap. Take a ride. A couple days rest and—"

Casey snorted, "Aw!" and this time he got up unaided.

The interne called Eddy sighed wearily, grabbed one end of the stretcher. "A tough guy," he said sardonically. "Come on, Brad."

Casey finally compromised and rode on the front seat of the ambulance until the driver cooperated and located a taxi stand. As he staggered into the tonneau of a waiting cab he said, "First thing, get me a pint."

"Of what?"

"Bourbon, or a blend will do."

"It's after hours," the driver argued.

"You know some place," Casey said.

"Well," the driver temporized. "I've got about a half pint here that I keep for—"

"Bring it out."

Casey saw the crowd in front of the still lighted drug-store on the corner when the taxi rolled past *Joe's Place*. By the time the cab stopped he was aware that this crowd was mostly newspaper men: reporters and photographers. But there was an ambulance and two police cars at the curb.

The whiskey warmed and quieted his heaving stomach, subdued the pain in his head to a dull throbbing. At that it was a moment or so before he acknowledged one odd fact—the crowd was at the drug-store instead of around the wrecked car, which had been moved to the curb.

Elbowing his way through the crowd and ignoring two or three friendly greetings, he found Tom Wade. The young photographer was hunched down in his overcoat, stamping his feet and blowing hot breath into the palms of his hands. Casey took him by the arm.

Wade's round, youthful face was pink with cold. The face cracked in a grin and the eyes took it up, became boyish, eager at sight of Casey.

"Where the hell you been?" he demanded. "Blaine was raving when you didn't come back from that boat fire with pictures—"

Wade broke off as he got a good look at Casey's face. "Jeeze! What happened to you?"

Casey did not answer. He brooded about Blaine, the city editor, raving for the boat-fire pix. Pressure was all he ever got from Blaine. His big worry now was not his pictures, but his camera. And he wondered if Jake Ansell had been hit too hard . . .

"Ansell," he asked. "He's not dead?"

"No, he ain't dead. But he's still out—or he was when the ambulance carted him away."

"Then what the hell," Casey pressed irritably, "is goin' on around here?" He peered over the window curtains of the drug-store that had been drawn up. All he could see was men's hats bobbing about and a uniformed cap. "Who's in there?" he demanded.

"Logan, Belknap and a flock of dicks."

"Yeah, but who else? Why?"

"Oh!" Wade said. "That's right, you don't know. A guy named Harvey—Ben Harvey—he's dead. Somebody knocked him off with a .45 slug."

"Harvey?" echoed Casey. The name stirred a responsive chord of memory, and as he tried to analyze it, Huse, a leg man for the *Express*, appeared at his elbow and said: "You heard him right.

It was Ben Harvey. You remember, he was a waiter at the Blue Grill. Star witness at the Sanford trial four years ago."

Huse's words recalled the case to him . . . Four years ago George Sanford had been a well-known figure in the night life of the city. Perennial playboy, young, good-looking, he had social position, plenty of money, and altogether too much leisure. To amuse himself he went in for gambling, women, horses, and a good time in general. His normally likable personality held two faults: he drank too much and he had a hair-trigger temper.

At that time Mike Pappas' *Blue Grill* had a dining-room on the street level and a half dozen private rooms upstairs. Sanford was a regular there.

And one night a bare-headed waiter had run out on the street and yelled for the cop on the beat. When the policeman climbed the stairs to one of the private dining-rooms he found Sanford in a drunken stupor with a gun in his hand. At his feet was the body of Sam Quinton, a small-time gambler, who had a police record and a reputation at Headquarters for plain and fancy blackmailing.

Ben Harvey was the waiter who heard the shot and opened the room door to see Quinton on the floor. Alderman Dan Kaufman had a room across the hall and both he and Nick Pappas were waiting outside the door when the policeman arrived. There had been a girl with Sanford earlier and Harvey said she was in the room when he first opened the door. But she disappeared. Her identity was never definitely established.

"The motive was obvious," Huse rushed on, breaking in on Casey's thoughts. "Quinton was blackmailing Sanford. Sanford was drunk, and he was hot-headed. Maybe he didn't even know he plugged Quinton. The girl who disappeared didn't help him any. If he'd been clear she'd have testified. As it was, she saw him shoot and skipped—or his lawyer helped her skip so she couldn't testify."

"Yeah," Casey began, "but—"

"Remember what happened at the trial?" Huse added. "Sanford denied the whole thing and when he got off with manslaughter, he turned melodramatic and started raving about getting the killer when he got out of prison," Huse nudged Casey. "Well, Sanford was released ten days ago. And here's the pay-off: Ben Harvey, the fellow who really convicted him, is murdered."

"Yeah, but wait a minute," rapped Casey. "When did Harvey get it? Where?"

"Here, dammit!" Wade said. "In that car down the street. Didn't you see the wreck?"

"The wreck?" Casey grabbed Wade's arm again. "You mean

this guy Harvey was picked out of that wreck?"

"Sure," Wade said. "He was in the back, on the floor, when they found him. Dead."

"Oh, for—" Casey's voice trailed off in disgust. He let go of Wade's arm and stood there immobile, a burly thick-chested figure staring sightlessly at the drug-store windows. His ulster was open and his baggy suit was disarranged, the knot of his tie twisted around under one ear. His battered felt was cocked on one side of his head, away from the bump over his ear.

"He was there," he muttered finally, "all the time."

"Sure," Wade said, jumping at conclusions. "He was in the car, but by the time we got here, they had him in the drug-store."

Casey blew out his breath and shook his head slowly. "Boy," he groaned, "do I get the breaks!"

"How about me?" Wade wanted to know. "Stand here freezin' to death and all we get is a couple shots of the wreck. All we will get, too, with Belknap around."

"We'll get one, all right," Casey growled. "It won't be as good as the other but—"

"What other?"

"Come on with the box and shut up," rapped Casey and headed towards the doorway. Wade picked up his camera and plate-case and followed.

Two or three rival photographers heard Casey's remark. When they made way for him and Wade, Quigley of the *News* said, "Now, pay attention, you guys, and see how the Big Shot does it."

Casey growled an oath and kept shoving until he ran smack into the uniformed policeman guarding the door.

"You can't go in there, mugg," the cop said.

"The hell I can't," Casey countered. He thrust out his jaw and added, "Tell Logan that Casey's out here. Tell him I've got a lead on this he oughta know about."

The policeman wavered, but not for long. Something in Casey's manner told him he was listening to a statement of fact. He opened the door and stuck his head in. A moment later Lieutenant Logan of the Homicide Squad appeared in the opening.

"Okay, Flash," he said bluntly. "What had I ought to know?"

Casey pointed to his swollen jaw. "See this?" he demanded. And when Logan nodded, "Well, the guy that put it there is the guy that slugged Ansell."

It was Logan's turn to hesitate, but his reaction was more rapid than the uniformed man's. Because he knew Casey, and when Casey talked like that you believed him. Turning, the lieutenant relayed the information to someone inside the store, and a gruff voice said, "Tell him he can come in, but no pictures."

Logan opened the door and

said, "I guess you can come in."

Casey grunted, a note of grim satisfaction that came from way down in his throat. Wade, slack-jawed and goggle-eyed, followed Casey into the store. As they went in a clamor of voices rose from the other newspapermen. The door closed them out.

The dead man was a thin, seedy-looking fellow in a worn gray suit and an overcoat that looked cheap and threadbare. He lay flat on his back, arms and legs outstretched, and the examiner's man who knelt beside him had unbottoned the vest and pulled the shirt and undershirt up, revealing a scrawny torso with a small hole about an inch inside and below the left nipple. Casey scanned the gaunt, bluish face until Captain Belknap of the precint house said, "All right, Casey, speak your piece."

Casey turned away from the body, glanced at the three plain-clothesmen who leaned against the soda fountain. As he completed his turn, he cocked one brow at Logan and Sergeant Monahan, spoke to Wade who, still goggle-eyed, stood waiting.

"Get out the camera."

Belknap was a big, florid-faced veteran with a chronic grouch and a dyspeptic disposition. He was jealous of his domain and a stickler for regulations. Now his face got crimson and his neck bulged out in anger as he snapped: "I said *no pictures!*"

Casey, watching Wade, said, "G'wan, get it out!"

"You!" Belknap clipped, "button up! And you—" he jabbed a threatening forefinger at the startled and uncertain Wade—"leave that box alone if you want to keep it in one piece."

Casey turned to the captain. "I was talking to Ansell when the car cracked up," he said. "You want to hear the rest of it?"

"I want to hear it and you're gonna tell it," Belknap muttered.

"Sure," Casey said. "And I'm gonna get a picture too." He turned to the bewildered Wade, who reached hurriedly for the tripod. "Come on, kid, shake it. The captain's impatient."

Belknap spat out a curse and started for Casey. "Listen!"

"I am," Casey said flatly. "But no pictures, no story."

He stood his ground and met Belknap's glare. The captain thrust a stubby forefinger under Casey's nose.

"You're gonna tell your story, all right," he rasped. "And you're gonna do it *my* way."

Casey matched Belknap's tone, said, "I am, huh?"

They stood that way, glaring, until a soft cough broke the spell. Belknap turned, still glaring. Casey turned. Lieutenant Logan, immaculate in his blue suit and Chesterfield, stood spread-legged, hands thrust in his trousers' pockets, fanning out his coat tails. His dark eyes were sardonic and there

was a faint smile on his lean, handsome face.

His attitude was that of a man accepting the inevitable, and somewhat amused by the process. The result was understandable. Logan knew Casey, knew what to expect when the big photographer was angry. He spoke gently, wearily.

"When he gets mad, he gets pig-headed. I think it would be easier and save time if we let him take a picture."

Belknap's lips worked silently. Abruptly, he spun about, spoke disgustedly:

"All right, damn it! But just one—and only to save time." He jabbed a forefinger towards Wade who was now fumbling with his camera. "Just one, get it?"

Casey relaxed, waited silently while Wade went through the familiar routine and got his picture of the room. Not until he had packed his paraphernalia and left did Casey tell the story.

The police found Casey's roadster and what was left of the smashed camera and plate-case early the next morning. By ten o'clock he had recovered the pieces and returned to the office. At five after ten, MaGrath, managing editor of the *Express,* sent for him.

Half hour later Casey was trudging down the hall at Police Headquarters, his face still flushed from the session with MaGrath. There had been no general bawling out; the issue—and Casey had to admit the managing editor was right about it—was simply that Casey had not made good on his assignment to the fishing boat fire.

MaGrath did not hold the smashed camera and equipment against his photographer; he admitted that if Casey had got the Ansell picture it would have been a world beater; but the *Express* was the only paper on the streets without pictures of the blazing fishing boat and MaGrath did insist concisely and profanely that Casey should have thought of his assignment before risking it with a wild, and as it turned out, foolish gamble.

"If it's any satisfaction to you," MaGrath had wound up, "I'd probably have tried to do just what you did. And I'd have been just as wrong. After this make sure of your assignment, then get as crazy as you want. If you get in trouble I'll get you out—as long as you've got pictures."

Lieutenant Logan, smartly clad in a neatly pressed Oxford gray suit, was slouched in his desk chair when Casey swung into his office. Standing with his back to the window was a middle-aged man with iron-gray hair and a gray-black mustache. For a moment, as Logan looked up, his eyes were thoughtful, as though retaining a previous mood; then he grinned at Casey's sullen, sultry-eyed expression and said:

"You look as if you'd been on

the wrong end of an argument."

"Ain't I always?" Casey grumbled.

"You didn't do so bad last night with Belknap."

"That was no argument," Casey said. "That time I had the goods." He put his camera and case on the floor beside the door. "Anything new?"

"Nothing but trouble. We can't find Sanford." Logan pulled out a cigarette, nodded to the man by the window. "You know Mr. Kaufman, Flash?"

Casey said he did. Kaufman, a neatly dressed and well set-up fellow, a former alderman who now ran a flourishing coal and lumber business, nodded and smiled.

"I asked him down," Logan said, "to see if he could help us. He was just telling me he didn't think he could."

Kaufman pursed his lips, frowned. "All I knew," he said, speaking briskly, incisively, "I told at the trial. All, that is, expect one thing. I've never told it before —because it had no bearing on the case—but I can tell it now, confidentially. I had a girl, one of the entertainers, in my dining-room that night. When I heard the shot I was panicky. After I heard the commotion in the hall I opened the door a crack. Mike Pappas and Harvey were waiting in the hall; as I looked out a waiter came up with the cop. Then, when they all went into Sanford's room, I let the girl slip out. Then I joined them.

"You can see why I didn't say anything about the girl," Kaufman went on, rubbing a bony jaw. "I was in bad enough as it was. If I'd been under suspicion I would have had to let the girl testify for me, which would have ruined me. My wife was alive at the time and"—Kaufman shrugged "well, you can imagine the stink the story would have made. Fortunately the case against Sanford was tight enough. I never had to produce my witness."

Logan said, "Hmm—yeah." He turned, stared out the window a moment, then sat erect and added, "I guess that don't help us much, but thanks for coming down."

When Kaufman left the room Casey said, "So you can't find Sanford?"

"Can't even get a line on him," Logan answered dryly. "Now, if you could have picked those two hoods that slugged you out of our gallery last night—"

"What you need," Casey grunted, "is more and better pictures."

Logan grinned and picked a brown felt from a hat rack behind the door.

"Where you goin'?" Casey wanted to know.

"First," Logan said, "I'm going to stop in and see Mike Pappas."

"I'll go with you," Casey said,

picking up his camera and plate-case.

"Why?"

"Because you might get lucky and I need a couple of good pictures to put me right with Ma-Grath. Also"—Casey's voice got tight and cold, and he touched a finger to the adhesive tape on his cheekbone—"I'd like to get another chance at that bird that socked me."

Logan's black eyes mirrored a grin. "You oughta know him next time you meet. If you locate him let me in on it."

Casey followed Logan into the hall, trudged behind him to the elevators and rode to the street level without speaking. A small coupe was parked at the curb. Logan slid behind the wheel and Casey sat down beside him, holding the camera and plate-case on his knees.

Ten minutes later Logan braked the coupe in front of a narrow three story brick building in the middle of a sordid and depressing block made up of discouraged-looking tenements and gloomy-windowed ground-floor shops.

Logan stepped to the sidewalk. Casey caught up with the lieutenant as he opened a heavy oak door under a Neon sign which spelled *Blue Grill* in swirling, exaggerated letters.

Thick and musty-smelling gloom enveloped them as the door closed. They walked through a thickly carpeted foyer, past a shadowy coat room and down a narrow hall adjacent to the stairway to the main dining-room on the floor above. Logan knocked twice at the door at the end of the corridor, stepped into a low-ceilinged room filled with heavy, expensive-looking furniture.

The man behind the massive, flat-topped desk looked up, smiled quickly. He stood up and made a sort of bowing gesture.

"Ah, Lieutenant. How are you?" His fat face beamed.

"Not too bad," Logan said. He looked around the room, said: "A nice layout."

Casey said, "How's it, Mike?" in a neutral voice that meant he didn't particularly care. There was a red leather chair near the door, deeply cushioned. Casey dropped into it, stretched his legs straight out and pushed back his hat.

Pappas sat down. "What's on your mind, Lieutenant?"

"Read the papers?" asked Logan cryptically.

"Oh, yes. You must mean about Ben Harvey."

"You guessed it. When did you see him last?"

"At the trial. Four years ago."

"That's a help," Logan said dryly. He looked down at his hands, rubbed the palms together. "He used to work for you and he was in town. I was hopin' you might've had a line on him."

Pappas waved a dimpled, manicured hand and a huge diamond

winked from a little ring finger. "Sorry."

"Yeah," Logan answered absently. "I don't suppose you've seen George Sanford in four years either."

"No, I haven't." Pappas smiled again and the expression made slits of his eyes. Casey, watching him, decided he did not like Pappas. He did not know why exactly. There was nothing particularly vicious in his record. Bootlegger, speakeasy owner; at present part owner of a chain of liquor stores and the *Blue Grill.*

Pappas held the smile, waited. Then he said: "But he was here."

"Yeah?" Logan's voice sharpened. "When?"

"Four days ago."

"What did he want?"

"I don't know. I didn't see him. One of the waiters told me. He asked some questions and went out. I thought he might be back, but—" Pappas waved the manicured hand again regretfully.

Logan stood up. "Come on, Flash," he said resignedly. "I guess this ain't my lucky morning."

Casey followed Logan back to the coupe, busied himself with his thoughts while the lieutenant drove uptown, crossed over to Beacon Street and parked in front of a narrow, brownstone house sandwiched in between two modest looking but extremely expensive apartment houses. When Logan cut the ignition and opened the door, Casey roused himself.

"Now what?" Casey inquired.

"I want a little talk, if I can get in, with Sanford's sister, Mrs. Reynolds."

Casey said, "Oh," in a rising inflection. He shoved out of the car, started across the sidewalk with his camera.

Logan stopped abruptly, shook his head. "No camera," he ordered. "It scares people. If they see that they'll slam the door in my face."

"You're proud, huh?" Casey cracked.

"Leave it," countered Logan.

Casey sighed, put the camera back in the coupe and followed Logan up stone steps. A lean stiff-featured butler opened the door in answer to Logan's tug on the bell-pull.

"Lieutenant Logan from Police Headquarters," the policeman said. "I'd like to speak with Mrs. Reynolds for a minute if she's in."

Without relaxing, the butler stood aside and Logan and Casey stepped through a narrow vestibule into a sombre hall, made more sombre by the dark walls and rug.

"If you will wait, sir, I'll see if Mrs. Reynolds is at home." The butler nodded toward an antique settee of black walnut, backed up three steps, turned and went silently up the wide, carpeted stairs.

Logan flipped his hat and

glanced about. Casey said, "Well, we're in, anyway."

In a few minutes the butler came down the stairs, spoke in a voice that seemed to have thawed a trifle. "Mrs. Reynolds will see you. This way, sir."

Casey and Logan followed the butler up the stairs, turned right at the landing and stepped into a squarish, high-ceilinged room filled with silk-covered period furniture and an enormous gilt-framed mirror which hung over the mantelpiece. Against the mantelpiece leaned a trim-figured man with a Van-dyke; in the chair beside him sat a plump, dark-haired woman dressed in dark brown.

She stood up as Logan and Casey stopped on the threshold, came forward. "I'm Mrs. Reynolds," she said gently. She glanced at the others and added: "My husband—and Miss Norton."

Not until then did Casey see the girl. Sitting at the grand piano near the windows she stood up and came forward to stand beside Reynolds. Casey thought he saw a faint glimmer of recognition in her eyes as they turned to him, but he was not sure.

He had last seen Jane Norton at the Fall meeting at Suffolk Downs. He had been at the track with Bryant, the *Express* racing expert, had taken a picture of the girl on the clubhouse veranda.

Now he recalled her frank easy way of speaking, her guileless, unaffected manner. And he recalled something else that had not occurred to him that other time —Jane Norton had been George Sanford's fiancee four years ago. She had never married, which, with her beauty and charm, was odd. Unless—could she still be waiting for him? Otherwise why would she be here in his home now?

Casey jerked his eyes from the girl as Mrs. Reynolds spoke. "You are from the police, I am told. What can I do for you?"

Logan said, "I came to ask about your brother. We're trying to locate him and—"

Reynolds stepped forward and said, "Why?" stiffly.

"Well—" Logan lifted his hat, dropped his hand—"we'd like to know where he was yesterday."

"You're not inferring that he's under suspicion for murder of that man Harvey who was killed last night, are you?"

"I'm not inferring anything—yet," Logan said flatly. "But we haven't been able to find George Sanford. There could be a reason behind it. The threats he made at the trial. And Harvey was the waiter who—"

Mrs. Reynolds' voice said, "Surely you realize that those threats were made under extreme nervous strain."

"It's preposterous," Reynolds cut in sharply, "to think George would try to shoot Harvey in cold blood. Besides, I understand the

two men who did the killing were seen."

Logan glanced at Casey, eyed him sardonically, said, "Yeah. Those two fellows might have done the job for reasons of their own. But they might have been hired. That's what we want to find out. That's why we want to talk with Sanford. And we'll have to keep looking for him until we find him."

Logan turned to Mrs. Reynolds. "Did you see him yesterday?"

"No."

"When did you see him last?"

"The day he was"—the voice broke slightly—"the day he was released from prison."

"Oh." Logan pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Did he give you any idea of his plans?"

Mrs. Reynolds started to speak, hesitated. After a pause, she said, "No," softly.

"Well, thanks." Logan walked to the doorway, turned. "But if you see him again you'll be doing us—and him—a favor by telling him to come and see us. We've got to talk to him and right now he's running the chance that some tough cop will pick him up and drag him in on his heels."

Casey was on the bottom step when he heard the muffled tap of light feet behind him. A soft voice called, "Mr. Casey!"

He turned as Jane Norton ran down to him and laid a hand on his arm.

The pale features, the blond hair, the frank blue eyes, gave Jane Norton physical loveliness, but the things that fed this loveliness and made it a real and vital force came from within.

"You remember me, don't you?" she asked. Casey nodded and she added hesitantly, "I—we were engaged when that other thing happened. It didn't matter to me. That day he came back from prison I would have married him then. But—"

Jane Norton hesitated, looked over at Logan who had gone on to the vestibule and stood waiting, eyeing Casey curiously. She flushed as she continued:

"I only tell you this to show you I believe in him. What I wanted to ask was for your help in locating him. You see, I don't know where he is either. And I thought perhaps you might see him, and could tell me—before you told the police."

The simple unashamed frankness of the appeal brought a thickness to Casey's throat. His face reddened under the woman's gaze and when he spoke his voice was a bit gruff as thought he was afraid to admit emotion in himself.

"I'm just a camera," he said. "A photographer. I'll help if I can, but I'm not the police—there's not much I can do."

"I understand," Jane Norton said simply. "But Jim Bryant told me about you. He said you got around. And you're the only one I can ask. So, if you see George,

will you tell him to call me, please? Even that would help a lot."

"Why sure," Casey answered gently.

"I'll be really grateful," Jane Norton said. Turning quickly, she ran up the stairs.

Casey was cursing when he reached the sidewalk. He said, "Why do guys who rate girls like her have to get in jams like this?"

"Everybody gets in jams," Logan said sardonically. "Only some guys are lucky—like you."

At four o'clock that afternoon Blaine, city editor of the *Express*, pushed back in his chair and surveyed Casey with cold gray eyes.

"We've located Ben Harvey's wife," he stated crisply, and named an address on Warsaw Street. "We haven't got any art on him in the morgue, and thanks to your horsing around, we didn't get anything but the drug-store shot last night."

"You're one up at that," Casey muttered surlily.

"So," said Blaine, ignoring Casey's comment. "I'm going to give you another assignment. All you've got to do is go down and see Mrs. Harvey and get a picture of her husband from her. Tell her we'll return any snap or photo she'll give us. Simple enough, isn't it?"

Blaine's lips curled in a mirthless smile and his voice was cutting.

"In fact, I don't see how anybody could muff that one. But you get odd and completely screwy ideas, Casey. So to make sure, take Wade with you. You see, I really want a picture and if the two of you try real hard—"

Casey did not hear the rest. Anger streaked through him, and he put down the desire to reach over and yank the sarcastic Blaine from the chair by wheeling and stalking stiff-legged from the city room.

He stamped into the studio muttering angrily. Bishop and O'Hearn looked up from their desks, grinned and exchanged winks. Wade leaned back in his chair and Casey snarled: "Come on!" Without waiting for an answer, he wheeled and pounded down the hall towards the elevators.

They caught a cab in front of the Express Building, and by the time they rolled into Huntington Avenue, Casey's wrath had evaporated sufficiently for him to answer Wade's questions. When the taxi stopped in front of a four-storied gray-brick apartment built flush with the sidewalk, one of a long outmoded row that lined each side of the street, he said:

"Wait here. If I don't get this alone it's because she hasn't got one. Anyway, two of us might make her think it's a gag."

Casey crossed the walk, yanked open a glass door flossily decorated with the words: *The Ardsley*. He walked through a narrow vestibule, climbed two steps to the lobby floor, turned

right and mounted rubber-treaded stairs to the second floor. Continuing to the end of the second floor hall, he knocked at a door numbered 2-F.

The woman who opened the door was instantly familiar to Casey, yet he couldn't place her.

She helped him, said, "Why, Flash!" and stepped back, gesturing for him to enter.

Casey took off his hat and moved into the room, his rugged face creased in a scowl. He said, "You're Sarah—"

"Sue," the woman corrected. "Sue Collins."

"Sure." Casey remembered suddenly. And then, as he turned to get a better look, he saw the man sitting on the cheap davenport, a wiry tight-lipped fellow with a thin face and hostile agate eyes. Casey's glance passed on and he saw there was no other woman in the room. Then the truth dawned on him.

"Are you Mrs.—"

"Hardly," the woman answered.

For a moment Casey studied her. In her middle twenties, he thought, but right now she looked older. Her brown hair seemed lusterless, merely hair-colored. Her face, pleasant enough, seemed haggard, weary. The blue jersey dress looked worn, out of style.

The momentary study helped refresh his memory. Sue Collins had been a dancer; he had seen her on the stage or in a night club chorus. Just where he could not remember for the moment.

"You've been away quite a while," he said.

"Yes." This simply, tonelessly.

"I'm sorry about your husband."

The woman did not reply and after an awkward pause, the man on the davenport said: "You want something? We were just going out."

Casey looked at the man, back at Sue Harvey. "I want a picture," he said, "of your husband. Have you got one I can use? I'll return it."

The man on the davenport looked relieved.

Sue Harvey said, "Why, yes," and stepped to an imitation Governor Winthrop desk, opened a drawer, searched around for a while. Then she brought Casey an eight-by-ten portrait cheaply framed in imitation leather. "Would this be all right?"

Casey said it would be fine and she went back to the desk, removed the picture from its frame. She looked at it for a long moment, then shot a quick glance at the man on the davenport. For a brief instant the tired eyes were alert, wary. She turned her eyes on Casey, said, "Maybe it would be better if I left it in the frame? Then you won't bend it."

She sat down in the desk chair, her back to the room, replaced the photograph in the frame. The man on the davenport stood up, began to pace impatiently. Sue Harvey

got up from the desk and handed Casey the picture.

"Promise me you'll give it back," she said anxiously. "The frame and—everything."

"Of course," Casey answered.

"And if it isn't right or anything, let me know."

Casey nodded, knew now that he felt genuinely sorry for the woman. He had a sudden desire to extend a helping hand. The impulse was motivated as strongly as it had been in the case of Jane Norton, but he could not tell why. The two women were direct opposites in appearance, in position; the only common bond was trouble. Yet, something in this girl appealed to him. Perhaps it was her quiet acceptance of defeat, her helplessness; perhaps it was because she asked no favors for herself, made no conscious attempt to stimulate sympathy or pity on her behalf.

He shook the mood aside, took the picture and stepped to the door. "I'll take good care of it. And if I can do anything to help, let me know." He opened the door, hesitated, asked a question that continued to trouble him. "I've been trying to remember where you worked when I last saw you dance, Sue. Was it the Lido?"

"No," Sue Harvey said simply. "The *Blue Grill.*"

Casey's rugged face was grim and his dark eyes brooding when he jumped into the waiting taxi and told the driver to go around the block and stop at the corner.

Wade, sensing the change in Casey's mood, said, "What's up?"

Casey related what had happened in the room, said, "This thing is beginning to get smelly. Sue Harvey worked for Mike Pappas. She married Ben Harvey and they left town. And now they're back and Ben gets knocked off and some mugg is in there keeping an eye on her. This might be something."

"What do we do?"

"You," Casey said, when the cab stopped, "ride back to the office with this picture. I'm gonna grab another cab and go back on Warsaw. If they're just going out, I'd like to know where."

"Then why can't I—" Wade began.

"You take that picture in and sit tight till I call you. Here's one assignment I don't muff. Get that picture into the office. After that—" He broke off as a checker cab approached, stepped out and flagged it.

Sue Harvey and her escort were coming down the steps when Casey's new cab rounded the corner. He told the driver to stop, waited there while the man and woman walked to the next corner and found a taxi. He had originally intended to try and get a picture of the thin-faced fellow with Sue Harvey. But the early winter dusk had closed in fast on the drab street, and he knew he

could get nothing without a flash bulb.

He was content now to follow them, and he gave the driver his orders, sat back on the seat.

The driver turned into Huntington, picked up speed until he was about a hundred yards behind the other taxi. He kept this position as they angled through the Fenway to an apartment-lined block running into Massachusetts Avenue. Here the cab stopped. Casey watched the thin-faced man pay his driver and hurry into a street-level doorway with the woman as his own cab rolled slowly past.

The street lights flashed on as Casey stepped to the sidewalk. He paid the driver quickly, hurried down the street to the apartment house, stepped through the vestibule to the little foyer. There was a single elevator shaft of the self-operating type, and a glass disk which glowed red, showed that the car was still in use. Casey turned to the stairs, went up two steps at a time.

When he found that the elevator had stopped at the third floor, he was temporarily stumped. So far all he had been doing was play a hunch. And until he had something more tangible, there was no excuse for calling the police. But if he could locate the proper apartment, watch it—

Six doors opened from the hall, and he walked to the rear, began to listen at each door. The first was silent, the second offered a radio dance band in full swing. There was a red-hot domestic quarrel going on behind the third door. The fourth was silent like the first. Casey scowled, stood by the elevator a moment, then continued to the two front apartments. He was standing in the center of the corridor when the door on his left opened.

Turning quickly, Casey saw a tall, curly-headed young man with cold blue eyes and face that was set and unsmiling. Recognition was instantaneous, but it was not until the fellow stepped from the doorway that Casey saw the automatic in his hand.

Casey stiffened, then relaxed, his eyes narrowing. His voice when he spoke was flat, nonchalant. "Hello, Sanford."

"Hello, Casey. Come in."

Casey stood motionless, a stubborn, scowling figure until Sanford snapped: "I said, come in."

"I got a break that time," Sanford said as he closed the door and leaned back against it. "I was sitting at the front window, waiting for Egan to bring her in." He nodded to Sue Harvey. "I saw the cab stop, saw your cab stop. Fortunately the street lights went on at just the right time. I thought you might come up."

Casey put down his camera and plate-case, glanced about the living-room of the "furnished" variety. Egan, the thin-faced man, was standing by a hall door. He

was grinning. Sue Harvey sat stiffly on a wing chair and kept her eyes averted.

"All right," Casey growled, "I came up. And I see you're still playing with a gun."

"For a while yet," Sanford said easily. "I've got some important things to do, and I hope you'll behave. I don't want you running around crabbing my act."

He turned to Sue Harvey. "Have you got those papers?"

"Not with me."

"Not with you?" exploded Sanford. "Where are they?"

Angry, stubbornly defiant without knowing in the least what it was all about, Casey said, "Don't tell him."

Sue Harvey looked up. Defeat, hopelessness showed in her tired eyes.

She took a weary breath and said, "I put them in back of the photograph I gave Flash."

Egan cursed, made a hurried explanation of the episode. "She must've slipped 'em in when she put the thing back in the frame."

"Why did you do that?" rapped Sanford.

"I don't know," Sue Harvey wailed. "I wasn't sure about this man." She glanced at the scowling Egan. "After what happened to Ben, I couldn't seem to trust anyone. But I knew Flash and I knew he'd keep his promise. I knew I could get them back from him and—"

Casey interrupted, his voice low, disgusted. "What a crummy louse you turned out to be, Sanford."

Sanford turned, eyes wide and angry and uncomprehending.

Casey said, "I saw your sister this afternoon—and your girl."

Sanford's eyes blazed. His face, clean-cut in spite of its prison pallor, was drawn, tight at the mouth. "You can leave her out of this," he snapped.

"I got a message for you," Casey continued. "I guess you know she loves you. She just asked a simple favor. She wants you to call her. Figure that. A heel like you that hires a couple of hoods to gun out a guy, then puts another one to browbeating his wife."

"Shut up!" Sanford clipped. "Where's that picture frame now?"

"At the office."

"Get it!"

"Like hell!"

"Get it!" ordered Sanford.

Egan pushed away from the doorway and pulled out a heavy automatic. "Get it, punk, or I'll club you silly."

"You and who?" leered Casey.

"Oh!" Sue Harvey's voice was like a weary sigh. "Please! I'm so sick of it all. Ben's gone and —oh, let's get it over with . . . Get the picture back, Flash."

Casey sat on the arm of the davenport and stared sightlessly out of the window at the darkened street below while he waited for

Egan to return. He thought things over . . .

He had called the office, spoken to Wade, who had not turned the photograph of Ben Harvey over to Blaine. He had told Wade to give the picture to Mr. Johnson —who was Egan—and that he would explain why when he saw him.

But Casey had done a bit more than this. Except for the smash on the head and a desire to get a crack at the two hoods who were responsible for this and his smashed camera, his desire to stay with the case had been for the purpose of getting some exclusive pictures. Now his interest was much more personal. Thinking of it, he traced the beginning of this interest to Jane Norton.

He could remember every word, every mannerism of her appeal to him. And Sanford had got the message. With Sue Harvey, his interest had heightened. That he had never know her intimately did not seem to matter now. A pathetic, defeated figure, her very helplessness appealed to him. She was alone and friendless, apparently, and getting the dirty end of the stick. If she ever needed a break, she needed one now . . .

The combination of interests made up Casey's mind—he wanted to be in at the pay-off. So when he talked to Wade he did it in a peculiar way which, to the layman seemed logical but which would seem funny to a newspaper man. His conversation was stilted.

To Wade he said, our "newspaper" instead of our "sheet"; instead of "shot" or "picture", he said "photograph"; instead of "Blaine", he said "Mr. Blaine."

And Wade had noticed the odd speech, had said, "What the hell kind of talk is this?" just before Casey hung up. He would be curious, and when Wade was curious, he was liable to do some thinking. Sometimes he hit on the right answer . . .

Casey was still turning the possibilities over in his mind when Egan came back.

Sanford jumped to his feet, said, "Get it?"

Egan pulled the picture frame from under his arm and Sanford took it, opened the back with trembling fingers. In another moment his feverish eyes were scanning the two or three typewritten pages which had been secreted there. When he had folded them and placed them in an inside pocket he turned to Casey.

"Get your camera and case and get in that closet." He motioned towards a door which stood ajar in the hallway to the other rooms. Casey stood up, but he made no move to obey.

"Do as I tell you," Sanford said thinly. "So far you've been a help, but now that we're getting someplace I'm taking no chances of your spoiling my plans.

Egan pulled out his automatic, advanced slowly. Casey eyed him

a moment, finally picked up the camera and plate-case. Egan slipped the automatic in his overcoat pocket and Sanford said:

"Into the closet and pull the door after you. I'll come up and lock it."

Casey moved slowly into the hall, glancing at the huddled and dejected figure of Sue Harvey in the wing chair as he passed. He pulled open the closet door, put his camera and plate-case on the floor and stepped inside. Reaching for the knob, he had pulled the door nearly shut when it happened.

The details of the next few seconds were never entirely clear to Casey. He could see but a part of the living-room, but he had presence of mind to hold the closet door open a crack.

The drama which unfolded before that two-inch opening was only partly visible, but such as it was it left no doubt. Casey, watching Egan and the back of Sue Harvey's head, heard the outer door bang open, heard the rushing entrance of someone into the room. He saw Egan's hand plunge into his overcoat pocket. Then a thick voice ordered: "Hold it!"

Whatever he may have lacked in the way of polish, Egan at least had nerve. He fell into a crouch and when his hand flashed from his pocket it held the automatic. The gun whipped up, leveled. A shot crashed through the room.

Egan's body jerked, spun sidewise, his gun arm swinging with the movement. He staggered, caught himself. He let go of the gun, dropped heavily to his knees. crumpled on his face, lay still.

Sue Harvey began to sob. A voice said, "Look in the hall, Mert. See if we've got to run for it." There was a pause; then another voice said, "Looks like it's okay."

A tall, thin man in a dark coat and light gray felt moved into Casey's range of vision; right behind him was a thick-set husky with a big nose and a lot of jaw; the man called Dutch.

Casey held his breath. The hand that hung close to the doorknob was cramped, sweaty. These were the two who had slugged Ansell and himself, smashed his camera, probably murdered Ben Harvey. But—where did Sanford fit? Dutch's voice said, "Where's them papers?"

"What papers?" Sanford said.

"Be silly," Dutch clipped, "and you'll get hurt." He turned to the thin man. "This other mugg brought a picture frame up here. See what's in it, Mert."

Mert moved off to one side, finally said, "Nothing."

"We ain't got time to fool," Dutch growled. "Light a cigarette." There was a pause; then, "I'll watch this guy."

Dutch leveled his gun and stepped out of sight, apparently covering Sanford. "You grab the girl. Give her a couple of burns

with a cigarette. You know how."

Mert came back into sight, puffing on a cigarette. He pushed back his hat, disclosing a bandage at one side of a sleek, black head. Looking at the girl for a moment as though he enjoyed the prospective job, he reached for her. When she started to scream, he slapped her across the mouth.

Casey's hand clenched on the door-knob. At the same time he heard a savage curse, then Sanford's voice rasped out, thin and metallic, "Never mind the exhibition, you rat! It's in my pocket."

Dutch said, "Hah!" A pause, "Swell. Now we can get started."

Mert set his hat back on his head and pulled Sue Harvey from the chair, moved out of sight with her. A door was opened and feet scuffed softly across the carpet. Seconds later the door clicked shut.

Casey went into the lighted living-room breathing heavily, his thick face moist with sweat. The photograph of Ben Harvey was gone and he went to one knee beside the crumpled figure of Egan, turned him over. There was a patch of blood high on the chest of the suit coat, and a hurried search for a pulse beat told Casey the man was still alive.

Muttering softly, he said, "There's a swell shot that I'm not gonna get," and moved quickly to the door, opened it warily just as the faint hum of the elevator motor filled the hall.

Casey ran for the stairs and was waiting beyond the bend in the landing between the first and second floors when Sanford and Sue Harvey filed across the foyer, flanked by Mert and Dutch. Waiting until the street door closed, he went down the remaining stairs, peered around the corner of the doorway. A small sedan was moving out from the curb.

When Casey reached the sidewalk the sedan was about fifty yards away and moving slowly. Glancing to his left he saw a taxi pulling out from the curb. He ran into the street, waving the hand holding the camera. As he reached for the door handle a round boyish face popped from a lowered window and Wade said: "Where the hell've you been?"

"Shove over!" ordered Casey, yanking open the door. And to the driver: "Follow that sedan going around the corner. A buck extra if you keep it in sight."

The driver said, "I can use a buck," and proceeded to earn it.

Wade said, "I knew something was up from that screwy talk of yours. So I tailed Johnson. While I was wondering what to do, two guys got out of that sedan and followed Johnson into the place. So I waited, and then they came out—all but Johnson—and I didn't know whether to look for you or follow 'em. Say, what goes on, anyway? And where's Johnson?"

"Upstairs with a slug in his chest."

"Oh!" His eyes bugged. "Murder?"

Casey told Wade what had happened. "And don't ask me the answers," he finished. "I thought Sanford hired the hoods and wanted the woman because she knew the same thing Harvey did. But he didn't hire 'em. What happened upstairs proves that. But he's been throwing some kind of hooks, or he'd have told the police where he was yesterday."

"So what do we do about it?" Wade wanted to know.

Casey glanced out the cab window, saw that they were moving west on Commonwealth, that the small sedan was rolling along about a hundred and fifty yards ahead.

"So we're gonna find out where these hoods go. Then we're gonna call Headquarters and tell Logan. After that I'm gonna get some pictures."

"You mean *we're* gonna get some pictures," Wade corrected, and Casey accepted the correction.

Presently the sedan turned left, began to move through a district of two and three-story frame buildings with flat roofs and triple-decked porches. When the sedan turned into a narrow, darkened cross street a minute later, Casey sensed that the chase was about over and gambled, told the driver to pass the intersection and stop. When he jumped out and ran back to the corner the sedan was parked at the curb a block and a half away.

Casey paid the driver, gave him an extra dollar and told him to wait. To Wade he said, "There's a drug-store three blocks back. Call Logan. Have him send an ambulance for Egan and get down here in a hurry. Tell him you'll meet him out front."

"And what about you?" demanded Wade.

"Me?" Casey tugged at his hat brim and picked up his camera and plate-case. "I'm gonna have a look around and get ready to take some pictures."

Wade climbed into the taxi, grumbling. Casey shouldered his plate-case and started down the street towards the sedan. As he approached he saw it was parked in front of a three-family house that was bordered on one side by a vacant lot, on the other by a similar structure that looked deserted.

He stopped on the opposite side of the street in the thick shadows of tree trunks, stood there motionless, studying the house. Light shone dully from behind drawn curtains on the second floor; the other floors were dark and the absence of curtains told him they were temporarily vacant. There were three tiers of porches; he thought the middle one could be reached by the stairs to the second floor flat. Because he was not sure and did not want to pound

around so close to the lighted front windows, he crossed the street and moved silently along the side of the house.

There was no other light except in the front room, and when he saw that there were back porches, he decided to investigate.

Removing his overcoat and placing his camera and plate-case close to the house, he climbed over the lower railing, stood on it and found he could reach the edge of the floor above. With the help of the thin supporting column, he drew himself up to the second-floor porch.

The door that apparently led to the kitchen was locked, but there were two windows in the rear. One of these moved up at his touch, and a moment later he was inside. Carefully feeling his way about, he found he was in a back bedroom.

Beyond the next partition he could hear a muted voice, as though someone was talking over the telephone. He waited until the voice ceased and footsteps sounded in the hall; then he opened the door on his right and peered into a narrow hall, dimly lighted by the reflection from the living-room at the far end. The kitchen was directly opposite him. He tiptoed across to it, felt his way to the back door. Unlocking it, he crept down the back stairs, recovered his coat and camera.

Although it seemed to Casey that his research had taken a full half hour, Wade was not in sight when he went back across the street. Several interminable minutes later, Wade got out of a taxi at the corner and hurried up to him.

"What the hell took you so long?" Casey grumbled.

"What do you mean long?" countered Wade indignantly.

"Well, it seemed long," said Casey. He explained what he had done, adding: "I've been settin' the stage for Logan—and some pictures."

Wade gasped, "Well for— Why didn't you wait and we could all bust in together?"

"There you go," clipped Casey. "No imagination. Bust in. And then what? Those hoods knocked off Harvey and a little shooting wouldn't scare 'em now. They were tough enough to stick up a cop. Bust in there and they'd open up. They wouldn't be fussy about the girl, or Sanford either."

Casey broke off, began to pace restlessly back and forth across the sidewalk. "This way, Logan can sneak in and get the drop before they know what's up and—" He stopped pacing suddenly and opened his plate-case. Pocketing two extra flash-bulbs and a plate-holder he picked up his camera. "Hell, I'm goin' back."

Wade groaned. "You're nuts," he whispered hoarsely.

"Maybe I am," Casey said. "But this time I'm gonna get some pictures, to make up for last night.

They're in the front of the house, upstairs. I can get in a bedroom and wait for Logan. And once I'm in, I'm in. Logan's okay, but cops are funny. You can't tell what they'll do. Suppose I wait and then Logan keeps me in the hall or some place until the show is over? Hell, I'm gonna be there when it happens."

"You know what MaGrath told you," cautioned Wade.

"I know, all right. He said, 'Make sure of your assignment.' And you know where my assignment is? Upstairs, to get Ben Harvey's photo. Hell, so far, I haven't even got that to show. And if I try going back without it Blaine will never stop screaming." Casey grunted softly. "Don't worry, I'm not going up there to grandstand. I'm through sticking out my neck to help somebody out of trouble. Once I park myself in that back bedroom I'm gonna sit tight and take no chances."

Wade, absorbing some of Casey's enthusiasm, said, "All right, then. I'll go with you."

"You'll stay here."

"Two are always better than one."

"Quit arguin'. Somebody's got to tip off Logan."

"Aw!" Wade moaned, "Don't I ever get any fun?"

Casey grinned in the darkness and walked quickly away. He circled the house and started up the back steps. He moved very carefully up the inky tunnel that was the stairs; he went slowly, on tiptoe, making sure of his footing at each step. When he reached the door he pulled it towards him, kept the pressure on the knob as he turned it. The latch came back without a click.

A peculiar sound met his ears as he pushed open the door and he took a half-step into the blackness of the kitchen before he identified that sound as running water. Then it was too late. Above the sound of the splashing water a voice cracked menacingly, "You're covered! Come in and reach!"

Casey did not know whether he was covered or not. He did not see the man but the voice was very close, and it would be silly to take a blind chance. He stepped into the room, his hands moved slowly up. The water was turned off in the sink. He waited, trying to pierce the darkness, until the voice said: "Step into the hall and keep going. Make it slow—and easy."

George Sanford, hard-eyed and tight-lipped, sat on a plush sofa beside the white-faced and frightened figure of Sue Harvey. Dutch squinted as Casey was marched into the living-room, said, "Well, the party's growin', huh? I'll hit you harder next time."

It was a few seconds before Casey could overcome his dejection and think reasonably. His idea had been all right. The two gunmen had not been suspicious.

Coincidence, that and nothing more, had tripped him up. He didn't regret the chance he had taken. If it had worked he would have had a front row with his camera—and you didn't get those chances without gambling. He was not unduly alarmed at the moment. Logan would be here in another five minutes and then—

Mert said, "Is it lucky I went out to get a drink, or is it?" He jabbed a gun in Casey's back, pushed him to the wall away from the windows and opposite the sofa. "He was sneakin' in that kitchen door. Hell, I thought we locked it."

"So did I," Dutch said. "I'll watch him. Make sure this time."

That did it, blotted out Casey's assurance and showed him one thing clearly. Logan would come, all right. But with locked doors there would be shooting. Unless Dutch and Mert were yellow—and he didn't think they were—he might as well get set for what was to come. Right now the thing to do was stall.

"So you didn't put the finger on Harvey, after all?" he said to Sanford, who shook his head. "Then why didn't you come clean with the police?"

"I couldn't," Sanford said. He hesitated, took a deep breath and continued bitterly, "There are lots of things you don't know, Casey. Probably nobody will know them now. In the first place, I didn't kill Sam Quinton. I was framed. Ben Harvey helped frame me, testified against me. Would I kill him? The one man that could clear me?

"She was a witness too, in a way." Sanford glanced at the downcast woman at his side. "She didn't harm me, except by keeping quiet. But she knew the story. For a year now I've had a private detective—"

"Egan?" Casey asked.

"—on Harvey's trail," Sanford continued, nodding. "Harvey was down and out and he finally agreed to give me an affidavit with the true story for ten thousand dollars, and take his chances on running out before they could get him for perjury."

"He did it for me," Sue Harvey sobbed. "I told him he shouldn't take the chance. He—"

"What is this?" Dutch broke in angrily. "To hell with all this talk. How did this guy—" he glared at Casey—"get wise to this place?"

Sanford glanced at Dutch, then went on as though there had been no interruption. "Harvey got in town three days ago. I had an alibi for yesterday. If I had gone to the police they might have had to get that affidavit to the District Attorney—"

"Shut up!" Dutch yelled. He fingered his automatic, scowled. "There's something screwy about this photograph guy," he told Mert. "If it's a plant—"

"We'd better take a powder," said Mert.

"And lug all three of 'em around?" Dutch snarled.

"Well—" Mert's thin face worked nervously and he wet his lips before he continued— "hadn't we oughta get out?"

"We've got to rub these two muggs out, anyway," Dutch argued angrily. "Why not now? We can take the dame and—"

"We weren't hired to knock off an army," Mert countered jerkily.

"We'll get paid," Dutch said.

Casey, fingering his camera, slipped the plate-holder from the back, held it there out of sight. To stave off immediate action he said, "You guys have been lucky. You'd better call it off and take your chances with the run out."

Casey glanced at Sanford, saw the fellow's face flush and his eyes narrow. He pushed up from the sofa and stood spread-legged, eyes bright and glaring.

"You got the affidavit, the one thing that'll clear me," he announced bitterly. "But that isn't enough, huh? You're going to shoot us down right here, huh? So I'll be sure to have the Harvey murder chalked against my name."

"That's about the idea," leered Dutch.

Sanford said, "Well—" and Casey saw his neck and shoulders move slightly with the tensing of muscles. Sweat stood out on Casey's face and his breath came hard. He shot a quick glance at Dutch who stood a good four feet away from him, knew he could not reach him with his hands. Then, in that same instant a faint scratching noise sounded from the front porch.

Mert swiveled startled eyes, said, "Hey!"

Dutch snarled, "I told you it was a plant!" As he uttered the sentence a loud pounding echoed from the kitchen door. He spun to face Casey. "Why you dirty—!"

Casey saw the gun hand come up and he did the only thing he could do. With a flipping, half-wrist and half forearm motion, like a small boy skipping a flat stone, he scaled the plate-holder at Dutch's face and leaped forward in a crouch.

The plate-holder sailed straight and true, one edge smashing flush against the bridge of Dutch's thick nose. The blow was more painful than damaging. Dutch flinched at the shock of impact, jerked the trigger in a sort of reflex action so that the shot went wild, over Casey's outstretched hand; then Casey had a hold of the gun wrist.

He was too busy during the next few seconds to know what else was going on. Still holding to the wrist, he hooked his left to Dutch's chest and face. Hunching his chin, he stood up under a similar assault. From the corner of his eye he saw Sanford on the floor, Mert with a gun in his hand. From behind him came a crash of glass. Someone yelled. A gun

roared. Then two voices rang out in quick succession.

The first voice said, "Drop it!"

The second voice said, "Hold it!"

Dutch stopped struggling and let go of the gun. His hands went up without being told. Casey turned his head. The man who had said, "Drop it!" was Sergeant Manahan. He leaned through a shattered window from the porch with a plainclothesman at his side and a service revolver in his hand.

It was Tom Wade who had shouted, "Hold it!" Framed in the adjacent window, he leaned in with a camera at his shoulder and pressed the shutter release a moment after Casey turned.

Casey blinked at the burst of the flashbulb, then stood there for a long moment, slack-jawed and staring while the sweat streamed down his face. He looked at Sue Harvey huddled on the sofa, at Sanford, who was on his knees staring at the widening circle of blood that stained Mert's collar as the man lay motionless on the floor.

Manahan said, "Where's Logan? I thought you were going to leave the back door unlocked. Guess it's a good thing a couple of us came this way."

Casey closed his mouth with an effort, swallowed. Wiping sweaty hands on his coat and still staring at Wade, he said, "Well, I'm damned! I do all the work and you take the pictures."

Lieutenant Logan read the typewritten sheets he had taken from Mert's lifeless body. When he had finished he looked at Sanford quizzically, finally shook his head and said:

"So you didn't kill Quinton?"

Sanford shook his head and Casey asked, "All right, who did?"

"This thing says Kaufman," Logan answered, "and it looks okay. It's witnessed and sworn to before a notary."

"Harvey was to deliver it to me today," Sanford said. "The one break I got was that he wasn't carrying it on him last night."

Casey had taken four pictures. "Would it be all right," he asked dryly, "if somebody let me in on this?"

"Quinton was blackmailing Kaufman," Logan said. "The night he was killed he followed Kaufman to a dining-room in the *Blue Grill*. She"—Logan glanced at Sue Harvey—"was in the room with Kaufman."

Casey's eyes widened and he said, "Oh, so she was the one he meant this morning."

Logan nodded. "Quinton and Kaufman had an argument. Kaufman had been drinking and he lost his head and pulled a gun. Harvey, who was waiter for the room, was in the hall. Kaufman propositioned him and he fell for it. The two of them dragged the body across the hall, dumped it into the room and threw the gun in after it. Well"—Logan shrug-

ged—"that was Sanford's room.

"He was draped over a table and one of the entertainers was fawning over him. He was in too much of a stupor to be sure of what was going on, didn't know what it was all about until the police came. And by that time Kaufman had got rid of Sue, here, and made some deal with the dame who was with Sanford. After that it was a perfect frame. What happened to Sanford's girl I don't know. But this one married Harvey after the trial and left town."

Logan stared at the girl, his eyes troubled. "It was a pretty crummy trick to play, wasn't it?"

"Oh, I know it! I know it!" Sue Harvey buried her face in her hands. Finally she looked up and spoke in a low, broken tone. "I've wished a thousand times I could have done it over, wished I had told the truth. I was so scared that—oh, I know it's no excuse. I didn't realize, didn't know what I was doing until it was too late; then I couldn't tell on account of Ben.

"I was terrified, I tell you. I've awakened at night in a cold sweat, thinking about it. Kaufman said Sanford would get off with manslaughter. I'd always been so poor. And Ben—well, Ben said that would give us the money to get married on. Things have never been right since. We lost the money; we've eaten and slept in hall bedrooms; we've been sick and on relief half of the time, and—"

"So you came back to collect again," Logan accused grimly.

"I didn't want to," Sue Harvey said huskily. "I'd made one mistake. I didn't want any more money that way. But Ben did it for me. It's my lungs. The doctor said I have to go away to a dry climate. Ben said he'd tell his story to the District Attorney if he had to, just so he could collect the money. And he came back—so I had to come too." She looked up at Sanford with eyes that now seemed hot and dry, said simply, "I'm sorry. If they had found out I was a witness and took me in court, I think I would have told the truth, but—"

"Well," Logan said, clearing his throat, "I guess we'll go and make a call on Mr. Kaufman."

Sanford moved towards the door, said, "I'm going too."

"You'd better call your girl first," Casey said sardonically.

"You stay here," Logan said. "We'll do all right by ourselves."

"I'm going with you," Sanford insisted.

"Not yet anyway," Casey growled. "You promised Harvey ten grand for that affidavit, didn't you?"

Sanford said, "Yes," and sounded rather surprised.

"Then pay off," Casey said. "Sit down and write out a check to Sue here. Now, before you go

clowning around and something happens to you."

Sanford seemed about to make an angry retort; then his pale face twisted in a sudden grin and he took out a check book and fountain pen. Hurriedly filling in the check, he tore it from the book and was screwing the pen together when there was a sudden commotion in the hall. All eyes turned to the door as it burst violently open and a burly plainclothesman pulled a struggling man into the room.

"I'll have your job!" the man shouted. "It's a damned outrage!" He was a tall, well-dressed man, his black coat hunched around the shoulders and a gray felt jammed over his ears. Then the plainclothesman spun him around and he was Dan Kaufman.

The plainclothesman said, "I was having a look and I caught him sneaking cross lots from the street in back."

Casey gaped, "Jeeze! That phone call I heard in the bedroom must've been to him!"

Kaufman's lean face blanched. His startled eyes swept the room, fastened on Dutch.

He yelled, "You double-crossed me!"

"Double-crossed you, hell!" snarled Dutch. "We got caught. The camera guy framed us or something."

"Shut up!" Kaufman rapped. "I'll handle it. Don't talk."

"Yeah," fumed Dutch, "you'll handle it. You promised us plenty of influence and protection and what did it get us? Look at Mert. Look at me. Talk? I'll talk plenty. I ain't got nothing to lose and—"

For a man of his age, Kaufman moved with surprising speed and precision. One vicious jerk freed him of the plainclothesman's grasp. With a continuation of the same movement he snatched a small automatic from his coat pocket.

Logan yelled. Manahan made a pass at the gun; the plainclothesman leaped forward. And Dutch chose that moment for his break. Standing close to the hall door, he spun about and jumped for the opening. He took two quick steps and then Casey, who was nearest, stuck out his foot.

Dutch tripped, went down hard. Casey let go of his camera and reached for the gunman. He jerked him to his feet, jabbed lightly with a short right and left to straighten his man. Then he crossed a right, leaning behind the blow with all his weight and strength as he struck. Dutch bounced against the doorway and dropped to his knees without a sound. Casey reached for him again and then Logan's hand grabbed his shoulder.

"Lay off," Logan ordered. "You mark him up and I'll get hell for it."

Casey let his arm swing down, relaxed. Touching the bandage

on his cheekbone, he said, "Well, that helps even up, anyway." He looked around, saw Kaufman standing with his hands up, staring at his own gun in Manahan's hand. Then Casey sighed and picked up his camera. Again his dark eyes were bright with interest, but his tone was weary, disgusted.

"Now," he sighed, "I suppose I gotta take another picture.

He did just that, and turning to Logan, added: "Boy, what a job!"

"You tryin' to kid somebody?" Logan asked dryly. "It might be a job to some people, but to you it's fun." He laughed, then stood there watching the big photographer with amused eyes as Casey stepped over to Sanford, took the check he still held in his hands, and continued over to Sue Harvey.

"Here," Casey said. "You helped pull a crummy deal four years ago, holding out like you did, but I guess you paid for it, one way or another. This'll give you a chance to fix up the lung. And what I said this afternoon goes: If I can help while this mess is being straightened out, let me know."

He turned, glanced at Sanford. "And you're not gonna make a liar out of me, either. Call your girl like I told her you would."

Sanford's voice was husky. "I will. And thanks a million, Flash."

Casey moved across the room, glanced at Wade. "Come on, kid. You've got enough and"—he continued to a small wall table, picked up the framed photograph of Ben Harvey—"so have I, now. It was a lot tougher than it looked, but here's one assignment I make good on."

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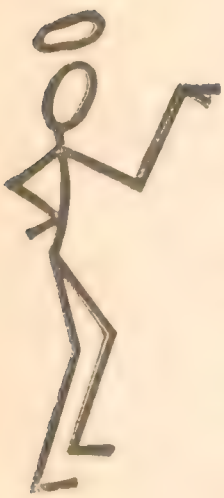

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force of habit

by . . . Alan Thomas

A murderer with a meticulous turn of mind tries his hand at dealing justice, with unexpected results.

HORACE FLEGG, once a name to conjure with at the criminal bar, turned over in bed and yawned. "Morning, Halliday," he said. "What's the weather like?"

Halliday set the cup of tea on the bedside table, then proceeded to open the curtains at the window.

"Blowing up a bit dirty from the sou'-sou'-west, sir, by the looks of it. What suit shall I put out?"

"The dark blue one. I'm going out for lunch. And Mrs. Hazard's coming to tea."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Halliday! How often have I told you to reserve your naval expressions for when you're afloat? We're ashore now."

"Beg pardon, sir. It's force of habit."

"Force of habit will get you into trouble one of these days, Halliday."

"Yes, sir. Will you be dining at home tonight, sir?"

Flegg hesitated for a moment. "Yes," he replied presently. "I'll be dining at home, about half-past seven. After that we'll get on with the stamps."

"Aye—very good, sir."

In our mundane lives it is the little things that we do automatically, from force of habit—that are most character-revealing. In the world of the criminal it is almost always a small, insignificant, completely personal characteristic that leaves one man's trademark on the crime.

Halliday was about to leave the room when Flegg spoke again.

"By the way," he said, not looking at his servant but gazing at the window, "I'm getting a bit tired of . . . er . . . of this fellow Carver."

"Carver, sir?"

"You've heard me speak of him."

"Oh, yes, sir. You mean the blackmailer."

Flegg winced. "That's the man," he said. "How much do you know about him?"

Halliday lowered his gaze to the floor. "That he was giving you a bit of trouble, sir," he replied, "and that the sooner we get rid of him the better. He's doing you no good, if I may say so, sir."

"You may certainly say so," declared Flegg. "Due to a slight indiscretion which I bitterly regret, Carver's with us, apparently for the rest of our lives, at any rate so long as the money lasts. He's the nastiest crook I've ever come across. And that's saying something for a lawyer who's spent as many years in criminal practice as I have.

"If only I'd gone to the police, as I've always advised others to do! But what's the use of talking? I'm not the only man who's spent his life giving good advice to other people but ignoring it himself."

He paused, took a sip from the tea cup.

"I'm supposed to see Mr. Carver," said Flegg presently, "at six o'clock this evening, to give him what he calls a 'final settlement.' "

"There won't be anything final about that settlement," observed Halliday. "Where, may I ask, are you seeing him, sir?"

"At the little hide-out he uses when he comes to town."

"You're seeing him alone?"

"Yes."

"How would it be, sir," asked Halliday, "if I saw him, instead of you?"

"You?" Flegg glanced up. "What could *you* do, Halliday?"

"I don't know anything about the—the indiscretion, sir, nor do I want to. But I know the type of man Jimmy Carver is and I think perhaps, sir, if I may make so bold, I'd be more at home with him than you would."

Flegg smiled. There was a confidence about Halliday's tone that appealed to him. Apart from everything else, Halliday must be twice the size of Carver.

"All right," he said quietly. "You see him, Halliday. But it's a risk—*my risk,* you know."

"I understand, sir. I'll be careful. His address, sir?"

"Flat 2A, King's Chambers, St. James'. On the ground floor." Halliday raised his eyebrows. "Quite a good address, if I may say so, sir."

"He's no pauper, our Mr. Carver," observed Mr. Flegg. "I can vouch for that."

Halliday turned to go. "You won't mind, sir," he said as he

reached the door, "if I take an hour or two off this afternoon?"

"Do anything you like."

"Thank you, sir. I'll see that the tea's all set for Mrs. Hazard."

Flegg enjoyed the day. He had an excellent lunch with a friend, and reached his rooms in Curzon Street in good time to receive his sister, Muriel Hazard.

He and Muriel had been close from nursery days. Muriel understood him as no other woman ever had and she was his closest confidante. There were very few secrets that he held from Muriel, and when anything was on his mind, even if he did not disclose it, she usually sensed its presence.

When she arrived at half-past four Halliday was there to open the door for her. The care which Halliday bestowed upon her brother had created a particular bond between him and Muriel Hazard; she greeted him with a friendly smile and enquiries after his health.

Tea with her brother was, as always, an easy, pleasant, companionable affair. If she noticed that he had something on his mind, she gave no hint of it.

At six o'clock she left and Horace saw her to the door. He then got out his stamp album and made preparations for the evening's work. Before long, Halliday appeared, carrying the customary tray of drinks.

"A sherry, sir," Halliday asked, "or shall I mix you a cocktail?"

Flegg moistened his lips with his tongue. "Did you see him?" he asked.

"Carver, sir? Yes, sir, I saw him."

"What did he say?"

"Not very much, sir. I expect to see him again later this evening. Will you take sherry?"

"I'll have a cocktail," said Flegg. "And have one yourself, Halliday."

"Thank you, sir."

Halliday mixed two drinks and handed one of them to his master on a silver salver.

"Here's luck, Halliday."

"Here's luck to *you,* sir."

The toasts were drunk and Halliday set down his glass. "You said dinner at half-past seven, I think, sir?"

"If that suits you, Halliday."

"Perfectly, sir."

An hour later dinner was ready. It was a simple, well-cooked meal. Flegg observed the steady hand with which Halliday poured the claret.

After dinner the two of them settled down to work on the stamp albums. Stamp collecting was one of Flegg's favorite hobbies and in Halliday he found a ready and interested partner.

They worked quietly until eleven o'clock. Then the two men went to their respective bedrooms.

Next morning Flegg turned over in bed and yawned.

"Morning, Halliday," he said

as his man brought in the cup of tea and proceeded to draw the curtains. "What's the weather like?"

"Flat calm today, sir. What suit shall I put out?"

"The light grey one. I shan't be in for lunch. Any news?"

"The Soviet Government is—"

"Never mind the Soviet Government. What about Carver?"

"Carver, sir?" He paused, then said, "I think there's a Latin saying, sir, but I can't remember what it is."

"Is Carver dead?"

"He is, sir."

"D'you mean to say that you . . . you killed him, Halliday?"

"I did, sir."

Flegg gazed out the window, took a sip of tea.

"What happened?" he said presently.

"It was really very simple, sir. He opened the door to me himself, being alone as you said he would be. And . . . well, I gave him no time, sir, to collect his thoughts. He was on the floor in the hall of his flat before he knew what had hit him. I then closed the door, carried him into the library and stopped his breathing with a cushion."

"No one about, Halliday?"

"No one about, sir. King's Chambers, as you may know, sir, are these days rather down-at-heel. Lived in, as far as I could tell, by bookies—that is, in what's left of the building, sir, for there's still a great deal of bomb damage round those parts—"

Flegg interrupted. "What did you do then?"

"Well, sir, I was back here in a quarter of an hour and, if you remember, we celebrated with a cocktail."

"So the body's still where you left it, in his flat?"

"No, sir. I didn't like the idea of leaving it in the flat, sir. As time went on there might have been complaints from the neighbors, if you'll forgive my saying so, sir."

"What did you do with it?"

"Well, sir, I took the precaution of putting it in a sack, sir, and last night, after you went to bed, sir, I slipped out and removed it."

"How did you get into his flat?"

"With Carver's key, sir, that I'd borrowed from his key-ring."

"Where did you take the body?"

"Well, sir, there were large garbage cans outside the Chambers. They seemed an obvious place for refuse. So I put Carver into one of them, sir."

"In the sack?"

"Yes, sir. I'd tied it up in case anyone should be inquisitive. But there wasn't a soul about at that time of night."

"Where did you get the sack?"

"I found a number of sacks, sir, lying beside the garbage cans. Purple sacks, sir, left there for rubbish, sir. Very suitable."

"So that's where Carver is now?"

"Unless he's been carted away, sir."

"Or discovered by the police," observed Flegg.

"Or discovered by the police. Will there be anything more, sir?"

"Not at the moment, Halliday. I think you've done enough."

Halliday turned to go. At the door he paused, turned back.

"There was one small point, sir — —"

"Yes?"

"I think we may agree, sir, that if there should be any questions, I was here in this house from half-past four onwards. Mrs. Hazard could be relied on to . . . er . . ."

"I see what you mean, Halliday. I'm sure Mrs. Hazard will recall that you let her in when she arrived.

"Thank you, sir."

"By the way, don't forget to buy the afternoon editions of the newspapers, in case there's anything of interest in them."

"Certainly, sir."

As it turned out, there was quite a lot of interest in the afternoon editions that day. And he read aloud to Halliday as he served his lunch.

Three days later, at half-past five in the evening, Halliday answered a ring at the front door.

"What name shall I say?" he asked of the burly man who asked to see his master.

"Inspector Widgeon of Scotland Yard."

"This way, Inspector," replied Halliday with admirable imperturbability.

An hour later the inspector left.

"I have always," Flegg said as Halliday appeared with the customary tray of drinks, "had the greatest admiration for the police."

"Yes, sir?" Halliday's tone was noncommittal.

"I also dislike telling lies, Halliday."

"So do I, sir, on the whole."

"I've just been telling lies on your behalf, Halliday."

"My behalf, sir?"

"Well, on *our* behalf."

"I hope they were convincing, sir?"

"Oh, not a doubt of it. The Yard has great respect for me, Halliday."

"With every reason, sir, if I may say so."

"At the same time, Halliday, although I'm obliged to you for your help, I think you really went a little far."

Halliday lowered his gaze to the floor. "One good turn, sir, deserves another. You saved me from the gallows. I'll never forget that, when you practiced law, sir, you successfully defended me from a charge of murder."

Flegg shrugged. On his retirement he had, perhaps, done a rash thing in taking Halliday in, to give him a fresh start at an honest job. But it was not the only impulsive action Flegg had taken in his life, and so far as service and

human relationship were concerned the risk had more than justified itself. But there were limits . . .

"If, because I did that," Flegg went on, "you think you are free to take the law into your own hands, I can't share your opinion."

"Of course not, sir. It won't occur again."

"I'm glad of that. It's true that Mr. Carver—"

"A most unpleasant customer, sir. Much better out of the way. Blackmailers don't deserve mercy, sir. 'Moral murderers' I've heard them called."

"Quite so. And between you and me, Halliday, I fancy the police are not too upset over his demise. They had several very nasty charges against him, but lacked the necessary proofs."

"Whereas we had, sir."

"Whereas, as you say, we had. All the same, Halliday, I don't like telling lies."

"May I suggest, sir, that, considering the circumstances, they may be classed as white lies? I'm sure Mrs. Hazard would take that view."

Flegg nodded. "As a matter of fact, I gave her name in the inspector as a witness to confirm my statement that you had not left this building from half-past four till half-past six."

"Covering the whole period, sir?"

"Covering the whole period. And from half-past six in the afternoon through the evening we worked together at the stamps—*that* was true, anyway—to the next morning. I vouched for it that you had never left the building."

"Thank you, sir."

"Not at all. But let this be a warning to you, Halliday."

"Very good, sir. There's only one point that isn't clear . . ."

"Why the police came to me at all?"

"Yes sir."

Flegg chuckled. "You thought you'd left everything ship-shape, didn't you, Halliday?"

Halliday frowned. "I made sure that I'd forgotten nothing, sir."

"There was one thing you forgot."

"What was that, sir?"

"The force of habit, Halliday. Do you remember tying up that sack?"

Halliday pondered for a moment. "Can't say I remember the details, sir."

"Precisely. You did it automatically. The Yard has men with long memories, you know. Your acquittal was a shock to them, and they've never forgotten the case of the sailor who should have swung for murder."

"I don't quite follow that, sir."

"It was a long shot and there was no other evidence to go on. The inspector confessed as much. But when their enquiries in the underworld revealed that I might

be one of the unfortunates that Carver was blackmailing and *when they saw the way that knot on the sack was tied*—was it very surprising that old memories should have stirred, and that it occurred to them to make enquiry in this quarter?"

Halliday gasped. "I remember now, sir," he said. "I tied a Chinaman's sleeve!"

"Exactly! The kind of knot that only a sailor would tie."

"It was habit, I suppose, sir."

"Habit, Halliday. And it might have landed both of us in serious trouble. Surely you realize that."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Halliday humbly.

"Don't mention it. But see it doesn't occur again."

"I will, sir."

"And now you can mix two cocktails."

"Thank you, sir."

"And a straight course for the future, Halliday."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Halliday!"

"Beg pardon, sir. It was force of habit. It won't happen again, sir. I promise you."

The Saint just whispered something important into our slowly crimsoning ears and that is—we haven't been giving you the whole facts when we keep reminding you about back issues. Like on page 127, wherein we only tell you about the first four issues being available. In addition there are others and of more recent date. We feel you'll want to fully enjoy the kind of reading pleasure treat which balances the Saint's unsurpassed verve and offbeat ebullience with the mordant wit of Philip Wylie, the superb craftsmanship of Craig Rice, the chilling arsenic-quilled patterns of lavender and old lace woven by Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, and the darkling wine of mystery, from vineyards of high repute, poured by such literary giants as G. K. Chesterton, Hugh Walpole and G. H. Wells. Each magazine is priced at 35c and be sure, when ordering, to mention, by volume and number, the issues desired.

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the burnt cigarette

by . . . Ben Ames Williams

So brilliant was Dr. Hounder's alibi that it mirrored the noose, even the smile of the hangman.

THIS STORY SHOULD properly be dedicated to Tim O'Hearn, since it is the record of the first appearance of that strange talent of his—the gift of seeing beneath the surface of things. That ability to stand in the background like a piece of furniture, so unobtrusive-looking that men forgot he was there, while he read their minds!

But the story is mainly concerned with the affairs of Dr. Ralph Hounder, and a cigarette he smoked and laid aside.

The fact that he happened to get possession of the pistol at all was a stroke of good fortune. At the time he was in the north woods with a guide who was also a game warden. They stopped one day at a squatter's shack in a clearing where there once had roared a lumber camp.

Dr. Hounder stayed outside while his guide went indoors to question the squatters. And as he stood there the pistol dropped from an open window at his very feet. He picked it up, saw that it

During the whole of an amazingly versatile writing career the matchless talents of Ben Ames Williams were employed to the hilt in depicting the tortured undercurrents of guilt and remorse which often seem to make human nature inexplicable even when it stands exposed before the bar of justice. It was his insight into the mind and heart of a designing woman which brought him his largest measure of fame. But the author of LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN *had a bent for crime fiction too, as this fine story attests.*

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was a cheap .38 caliber weapon with a barrel from which the nickel had chipped off and a handle half cracked away. He smiled, imagining the squatter must have been frightened because he had no pistol permit, so wanted to be rid of the thing. Dr. Hounder dropped it into his pocket.

Later that day the whimsical thought occurred to him that if he ever wished to commit a murder this would be a useful possession, this nameless pistol from a nameless source. Dr. Hounder knew that murderers were frequently traced by the weapon they used.

He kept the pistol without any plan to commit murder. And he still had it because he was a bachelor and there was no woman in his house to discover it and throw it gingerly away. The original cartridges were still in the cylinder. All excepting one.

He fired the thing one day out of curiosity and was interested to discover that the report was not loud; was no more than a flat, snapping crack. He kept the pistol locked in a steel box where his personal and private pharmacopoeia was also kept.

The pistol was not the doctor's only secret.

The mistake he made would never have been made but for this other secret of his. A sudden difficulty in replenishing his stock of the drug he used had left his nerves in a jangling state.

Then Dr. David Mills called him in consultation on Mrs. Farraday and they agreed upon a dosage which—Dr. Mills having departed and the nurse being delayed elsewhere—Dr. Hounder administered. His hand shook a little in the measuring, and Mrs. Farraday died before morning.

Her death had not been unexpected. The poor lady had been ill for weeks and she was old and ready to die. Nevertheless, it was a shocking thing for Dr. Hounder. As soon as he realized his mistake he had, of course, taken precautions. Her death might have been expected in the natural course of events without that mistake of his, and there was no reason to suspect him of a mistake.

By the time the body was buried and the danger of an examination was past, Dr. Hounder decided that he was safe from discovery. Then, three or four days after the funeral, James Farraday sent for him.

Farraday was as old as his wife. They had no children and they had lived alone in a great house surrounded by pleasant hedged grounds, attended by two old servants. Farraday was wealthy. It was said that his money and property would go, on his death, to several worthy institutions. There was certainly no reason to suppose that Dr. Ralph Hounder would benefit in any way by Mr. Farraday's death.

That summons to visit Mr. Farraday had made him a little uneasy, and the reason for it, when he learned it, was startling. It appeared Mr. Farraday had conceived the idea that his wife's death need not have occurred.

"Not yet, at least, Dr. Hounder," he explained. "I know she was very ill, but I saw no sign of an approaching crisis in her the day she died. And her more serious attacks were preceded by symptoms which I could see. Yes, her death was a shock to me."

The old man's feeble eyes filled with tears. "My grief prevented clear thought at first. But now that I have reviewed the matter it seems to me possible that Dr. Mills made a mistake in his prescription."

Dr. Hounder heard this with a sense of relief. The tension in his nerves and muscles relaxed. He said diplomatically, "It is possible you are right, sir. But I am inclined to doubt it. Dr. Mills is a very careful man. We agreed on the course of treatment, he and I, before he left the house that day. I remained to talk with your wife for a little after Dr. Mills was gone. I left when the nurse returned."

"I appreciate all you did, Dr. Hounder," John Farraday assured him. "I have no thought of blaming you."

Dr. Hounder bowed. "That is very generous to you, indeed, Mr. Farraday."

"But somebody's to blame," said Farraday, his old voice trembling. "I feel it—I feel there was something—well, irregular, in her death. I feel it my duty to ascertain the facts."

"When our loved ones leave us," Dr. Hounder suggested, "we are too apt to accuse ourselves, too apt to think we have been remiss or careless or have done less than we might." Dr. Hounder's tone was reassuring.

The old man had the stubbornness of age. "Perhaps you are right," he said. "Maybe I am unreasonable." He smiled placatingly. "Yet I wish to be sure in this matter, Dr. Hounder. I sent for you to ask if you would object to my seeking an order to exhume and examine my wife's body?"

Dr. Hounder found himself replying in the suave tone habitual to him, that he did not object in the least. But inside him there rose a sudden panic at the thought of what an autopsy on Mrs. Farraday would reveal.

Even as he reassured Mr. Farraday, consenting to the exhuming and the autopsy, his thoughts were on that scene at Mrs. Farraday's bedside a week before.

Already the scene was distorted in his mind. He could not be sure what actually had happened. His nerves had been jumpy that day. The old woman was near death, anyway, so he hadn't been much concerned. He saw quite

clearly now, however, that if Mr. Farraday went ahead with this plan of his it meant ruin for Dr. Ralph Hounder, the fashionable practitioner.

". . . Write the letter," he heard himself saying to John Farraday. "I suggest that you write it tonight and I will call tomorrow morning and read it before you send it off, to be sure the form is correct. Meanwhile, I will consult with Dr. Mills."

Mr. Farraday objected to his consulting in advance with Dr. Mills, whom he seemed to feel was to blame for his wife's death. So Dr. Hounder agreed to keep the matter of the request between them until permission was granted for the exhumation.

But as he left Mr. Farraday his thoughts turned to murder . . .

His plans were laid with scientific accuracy and with artistic simplicity. The ordinary doctor, he told himself, decided on murder, would choose a drug. The very use of the old pistol was, he felt, a stroke of genius on his part. He sat up late that night, considering the project, until there awoke in him a certain zeal for it.

He knew the layout of the Farraday house, knew the routine of the occupants. It stood at the corner of two intersecting streets, in a sparsely settled neighborhood. The house itself was near the sidewalk. Mr. Farraday was accustomed to receive callers in his big living-room on the ground floor. Behind his easy chair there was a huge fireplace in which a small fire burned even when the days were warm. French windows opened onto the veranda. There was a mail-box at the corner, about six steps from the veranda rail, and it was secured to a post set in the hedge that surrounded the grounds.

Dr. Hounder took care to check the position of the mail-box the next morning for it had a part in what he meant to do. Mr. Farraday's servant was an old man, and like John Farraday himself, somewhat hard of hearing.

Dr. Hounder closed his eyes and visualized the living-room where he would see John Farraday tomorrow morning—the door in a side wall opposite the windows; the desk table where Mr. Farraday would be sitting; the fireplace half a dozen feet away; the book-shelves along the wall. He planned all his movements with care.

Only one thing he must leave until morning—arranging for the servant to be elsewhere at the moment when he, Dr. Hounder, entered Farraday's living-room.

When his plans were complete he found a small cardboard box of a size to hold the pistol. He cut out one end of this box and laid the piece of cardboard aside. Then the box itself he wrapped in brown paper and tied securely with cord, leaving the open end free.

The paper at that end he did not fold.

He tested this device, to be sure it was practical; practiced inserting the pistol, adjusting the cardboard end he had cut from the box, folding the paper and tying the final knot, until his fingers did the job with mechanical smoothness. Satisfied with his skill in this maneuver, he tried another—wrapped the pistol in a handkerchief and placed it in his right-hand coat pocket; sneezed, drew out handkerchief and pistol as though to blow his nose, and went through a pantomime of pulling the trigger.

There were other movements he considered and rehearsed alone there in his office till late in the night. When he was satisfied with every detail he went to bed and immediately to sleep.

In the morning, as a final touch, he addressed the box which would contain the pistol to John R. Hands, 23½ A Street, Lancaster, California. The name Lancaster he got from a map; the rest was fiction. Then he weighed it, the revolver inside, and affixed the proper number of stamps.

About half-past nine he got into his car and drove toward the home of John Farraday. As he approached the house he drove slowly, passed, drove around the block, passed again. The second time he passed he saw a man entering the Farraday door.

Thus assured that John Farraday would, on his arrival, be engaged, he drove boldly up to the house, stopped his car, got out, went up the steps, and rang. The pistol was in his right-hand pocket, wrapped up in a handkerchief. The cardboard box was in his doctor's instrument bag.

If he had personally arranged what followed, matters could not have gone more to his fancy. The old serving-man admitted him, told him that Mr. Farraday was engaged and suggested that he wait in the small music-room across the hall from the living-room. Dr. Hounder told the man he need not return.

"I'll just go in when Mr. Farraday's caller leaves," he said, and the old fellow nodded and went toward the rear of the house.

Dr. Hounder settled himself to wait. His nerves were shaky, but he knew a remedy for that and quickly took a little pill from his bag. Thereafter his senses became more alert. Calmly he listened to the sounds that came from the closed room across the hall; low voices, sometimes rising, and once in argumentative tones. Farraday was on occasion an irascible old man, the doctor knew.

Finally the caller departed. John Farraday did not show himself until the man's footsteps left the house. Then he went across the hallway and into the living-room. Bag in his hand, Dr. Hounder stood in the doorway and said, "Good morning, sir."

John Farraday said, "Ah, good morning, Dr. Hounder." He did not rise, and he apologized for the omission. "My old legs are a bit infirm," he explained.

Dr. Hounder closed the door, deposited his bag on a chair, and approached the desk. "Well, have you written the letter?" he asked cheerily.

"I've the letter right here," Farraday replied, drawing it from his pocket. At the same instant Dr. Hounder sneezed.

"You've taken cold," John Farraday suggested with solicitude.

The physician nodded, sneezed again. At the same time, from his right-hand coat pocket he drew a handkerchief. He was standing beside the old man's chair. The folds of the handkerchief and the fact that the pistol muzzle almost touched Farraday's head muffled the explosion. Farraday fell forward across his desk with a little thump, cured of all worldly cares and ills.

Dr. Hounder wasted no time. He put the pistol down upon the edge of the desk and reached for the letter. Farraday's hand still clutched it and it lay in such a way that it was just beneath his head.

Dr. Hounder instantly perceived that unless it were snatched away quickly there would be a clean space upon the bloody desk blotter where it had been. He had it in his hand within a split second; was reassured to see that the clean square on the blotter was already being stained and blotted out.

To be sure it was the right letter he opened it, read quickly, then tossed it into the fire.

While he watched it burn he picked up the pistol and handkerchief, and cleaned his hand with the latter. As the letter was crisping into ash he turned to his bag, took out the cardboard box, thrust into it pistol and handkerchief, and with half a dozen swift motions closed the end and tied it with the cord.

Then he went over to one of the French windows, and looked up and down the street. No one was visible. The window opened easily. He stepped lightly across the lawn and reached over the hedge and laid the parcel, stamped and addressed atop the mail-box to await the postman. Then he went quickly back into the living-room, picked up his bag and opened the door into the hall.

All of this had taken no more than five minutes since he first entered the living-room. Now he dropped his bag, ran along the hall toward the rear of the house, shouting for the serving-man. There was very realistic consternation in his voice . . .

Dr. Hounder himself telephoned the police; reported the murder of Mr. Farraday and agreed to await their arrival. He was at the house when Dr. Spargent, the medical examiner, arrived and the two pro-

fessional men consulted gravely.

Dr. Hounder's story was explicit. "There was someone with Mr. Farraday when I arrived," he said. "I waited in the music-room across the hall. After a while the caller went out but it seemed to me I heard voices inside the living-room so I assumed that there was someone else still with the old man. A little later I thought I heard a book drop on the floor. Nothing more.

"After a while, when there was a prolonged silence, I decided the voices had been in my imagination, and I crossed the hall and entered the living room. Mr. Farraday was slightly hard of hearing, so I did not bother to knock for I knew he would not hear. I opened the door and saw him crumpled down on his desk. I took a quick look, saw at once that he was dead. The wound was visible as he lay.

"I summoned the servant, then phoned the police. A grim thing, certainly."

Dr. Spargent nodded. They were standing in the room where John Farraday lay and the medical examiner's eyes were busy. In the hall behind stood a patrolman who had come with Dr. Spargent.

Dr. Spargent said to Dr. Hounder, "There's no reason why you should stay. But I may want to talk to you later." He knew the reputation of the eminent practitioner and respected it.

"I'm interested," Dr. Hounder replied, "to see what you do. Do you mind if I watch?"

Dr. Spargent nodded. "First thing is always photographs with me," he said. "The eye may miss details but a photograph is reasonably reliable—and a permanent record."

He produced a camera and folding tripod from his bag and busied himself about the room, photographing the scene and body at many angles. Dr. Hounder watched, keeping in the background.

The medical examiner was not talkative but Dr. Hounder found himself impelled to speech. He kept up a running commentary on the other's movements, a running fire of conjecture regarding murder itself.

"Who would have wanted to kill the old man, do you suppose?" he would ask; and, when Dr. Spargent made no reply: "He was a lovable old fellow." After an interval: "Whoever it was couldn't have gone out through the hall or I'd have seen them. Must have come in by the window and gone that way."

He crossed to the window to look out, and saw the blue-gray of a postman's uniform passing; saw the postman pause at the box on the corner to collect the mail there, and felt a burst of high relief as he saw the parcel go into the mail sack.

Dr. Spargent was busy making photographs, measurements and

notes. The policeman at the door held back the two distraught servants and a reporter just arrived on the scene.

Other policemen appeared, took up their posts on the porch. A plain-clothes man arrived and stood in the doorway, watching Dr. Spargent's actions with respect.

The silence of these others began to disturb Dr. Hounder. He began to wonder if their silence meant suspicion of him. And he talked on, trying to appear undisturbed . . .

The pistol was safely gone; he himself had an alibi, since he could prove he had not left the house. And there was no apparent motive; no reason that anybody could know for him to kill Mr. Farraday . . .

It was at about this time that he first saw the fingerprint on the edge of the desk.

Dr. Hounder knew that criminals were sometimes detected by their fingerprints. Considering this danger in advance, he had weighed means to avoid it. Gloves? Awkward and in themselves calculated to betray. The simple thing was to avoid leaving any prints. If any were left it would, after all, be possible to point out that he had been in the room the night before.

Dr. Spargent had asked him idly: "Did you touch the body after you discovered it, doctor?"

Dr. Hounder had replied: "No, I could see that he was dead by a single glance at that head wound. No need of touching it."

Dr. Spargent wished to make a photograph of the desk from the door and asked him to step back out of range of the camera. Dr. Hounder leaned against the bookshelves. The desk was between him and the light and he saw, on its edge, the print of a fingertip.

On the red mahogany the print seemed to him glowing and red. He remembered his own fingers had been red with blood when he finished handling the letter. His thoughts suddenly began to race . . .

The pistol had been lying there on the table, the handkerchief beside it. When he picked up the handkerchief to wipe his hands one finger must have touched the polished surface. Yes he had left his mark there, in blood! And that was enough to hang him!

In the silence the shutter of the camera clicked, and Dr. Hounder started at the sound. His thoughts were racing. What could he do about that fingerprint? He had to resist the impulse to rush forward and, with one sweep of his hand, obliterate that damning mark.

But caution held him back. They might not see the print at all. It might be blurred, indecipherable. He tried to regain his calm, to do some clear and accurate reasoning.

There must be a way to spoil that print. If he were calm he could find it. But for that faint

smear of blood upon the desk top he was safe. So he would remove it . . .

The print was almost invisible from where he stood. But for a slant of light which made it seem conspicuous, he would never have discovered it. It was at the very edge of the desk, and it appeared to be a scar on the wood, at a distance.

He suddenly realized the solution of his problem, and he almost laughed aloud at the perfect simplicity of it. Dr. Spargent was preparing to set up his camera near the desk now; he muddled and puttered to and fro. Dr. Hounder lighted another cigarette, moved casually closer to the desk.

"Can I help?" he asked Dr. Spargent. "Perhaps hold something for you."

Dr. Spargent handed him a plate holder, muttered thanks. Dr. Hounder took the thing in his left hand. After a moment he sneezed loudly. Then, casually he took the cigarette from his lips and laid it on the edge of the desk, thus freeing his right hand to reach for a handkerchief.

He had laid the cigarette with some care exactly upon the fingerprint. Standing directly above the spot, he could not see the print at all. But he had carefully noted the spot and was sure the cigarette was properly placed. His impulse, even then, was to smudge the thing. But he noticed that the dull eyes of the patrolman were upon him and feared to arouse suspicion.

Dr. Spargent still puttered. Dr. Hounder stood patiently by, the plate holder in his hand, seeming to have forgotten his cigarette entirely. It burned, a little wisp of smoke twisting upward from its end. By and by it would reach the wood and obliterate that damning mark. Covertly he watched it, measuring its progress. The shutter clicked; another picture done.

Dr. Spargent put away his camera, disjointed the tripod and put it away. He withdrew to the farther end of the room and sat down at a table there, collating his notes and measurements. The plain-clothes man joined him, and Dr. Hounder approached them confidently.

The cigarette had almost reached the desk's edge. Three minutes more and its heat would begin to scorch the mahogany. Safety three minutes away!

"Anything I can do," he asked, "before I move along?"

Dr. Spargent said courteously, "You might tell Riley here what you told me. How you found the body, I mean."

Dr. Hounder repeated his story with just enough variation to lend an air of truth to it. The plain-clothes man listened with downcast eyes, asking a question or two. Dr. Hounder was laughing to himself. A ridiculous thing, this; setting such dull men to catch

criminals. They were so easily fooled!

Across the room a little thread of smoke lifted upward from the cigarette. While he talked to Riley he watched this smoke with secure and dreamy satisfaction. Soon he would be safe, all his tracks covered, nothing more to fear.

While he talked, while Dr. Spargent scratched at his notes, the policeman in the doorway left his post, crossed to the desk beside the dead body and picked the smoldering cigarette up gingerly between finger and thumb. He studied the surface of the desk where it had lain, frowned.

Dr. Hounder, his back turned, did not see this. By now, according to his calculations, the fire would have seared the wood . . .

The policeman walked slowly across the room, still pinching the butt of the cigarette in his great hand, touched Dr. Hounder on the elbow. The eminent practitioner turned.

"Here's your cigarette," said the patrolman. "It would have burned the desk in another minute."

Dr. Hounder stared at the patrolman, whose eyes were blank and dull. In their very blankness the physician read a deadly menace.

Dr. Spargent had opened one of the French windows to admit a little of the balmy morning air. Dr. Hounder could see his car, out by the gate.

"I looked at the spot," said the patrolman. "It wasn't burned."

At these simple words, Dr. Hounder gave in to utter panic. He struck the dull patrolman, ran towards that open window . . .

All of the men in the room were trained to action. They caught him, quick as a terrier has its rat. There was something curiously ratlike in his abject squealings. . . .

"I was watching him," the patrolman explained slowly when Dr. Spargent questioned him. "He looked at that spot so much I got curious about it. So when he turned away I went over to see why he'd gone to such trouble to put his cigarette there."

"A mighty good guess, O'Hearn," the medical examiner said.

"Thanks," O'Hearn said. He added, "And when I picked up the butt and saw it was right on top of that fingerprint, I was pretty sure what he'd meant to do."

"But it wasn't *his* fingerprint," Dr. Spargent said. "The maid left it when she oiled the desk this morning, we'd already checked it against the servants' prints."

O'Hearn nodded. "That's so," he assented. "But the doc didn't know that, I guess. He thought he'd made it—in blood."

"I was wondering about him because of the way he talked. He couldn't seem to stop," Riley mused.

"The clever ones always do the most talking in the end," replied O'Hearn.

tokyo payoff

by . . . Walt Sheldon

The subtle daring of an oriental sleuth linked with a G.I.'s keen savvy play havoc with a black market crime conspiracy in Nippon

IT WAS A hot summer morning in Tokyo. The humidity was already high when Master Sergeant Benjamin Harrison Johnson, Office of Special Investigations, patiently climbed the concrete stairs to the sixth floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Building, located just south of the Emperor's Palace Grounds.

When he reached the fourth floor he paused, handkerchiefed his brow, then began to climb again. It was not that Ben Johnson was in bad shape. On the contrary, he was big and tough. His nose was flat, consisted largely of scar tissue, and one of his ears was a bit more shapely than the other because a surgeon had made it for him.

Ben took the stairs slowly simply because there is no mortal, healthy or otherwise, who can keep from wilting under Tokyo's summer heat.

He reached the sixth floor finally and went directly to a tiny office at the back of the building. There was Japanese lettering on the frosted glass of the door, but

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The background flavor of post-war Tokyo is so strong in this story that you feel and hear and even smell the teeming life of the Ginza, that exotic section of Japan's capitol city so familiar to the American soldier. This new story is quite as magical as Captain Walt Sheldon's enthusiastically acclaimed novel of the U. S. air forces in Japan, TROUBLING OF A STAR.

a black-and-white wooden sign just above it said in English: INSPECTOR GEICHI NIKKIYAMA—*Special Cooperator*.

Ben knocked once, then opened the door. Inside, a small Japanese in an ill-fitting black jacket and high, starched collar sat at a desk with his face upturned toward the ceiling. He held his right hand a few inches above his face, and from this dangled a black silken thread that disappeared into his open mouth.

"Nikki," said Ben Johnson, "what on earth are you doing?"

Inspector Nikkiyama calmly withdrew the thread, and presently a neatly compressed cylinder of oiled silk, on the end of it, came out of his mouth. He lowered his head and grinned.

"*Ohayo gozai mashita.* Good morning," he said, happily and formally. "Excuse, neh? Is making practice for most celebrated art of *ninjitsu*."

"*Ninjitsu* again." Ben shook his head in mock disgust.

"Ah, so! *Ninjitsu* is most ancient practice."

"Don't tell me. I know it by heart. Most ancient practice of spying and detecting begun by ancient *samurai* centuries ago. You learn from the age of eight all manly sports, self-defense, the use of weapons, the sciences of shadowing, picking pockets and disguise. Only seven *ninjitsu-jin* left in Japan today, and you're one of 'em. Okay, Nikki, what's the string gag?"

Nikkiyama unrolled and unfolded the oiled silk. It came out to about the size of a piece of writing paper. "Is method of carrying message. Thread is fastened to back tooth, message remains in stomach. If enemy makes capture they look for message everyplace but in stomach. Very useful maybe sometime."

Ben laughed. "Maybe. But make mine hamburger. Anyway, I'm not thinking about secret messages this morning."

"Ah, so—you have problem!" Nikki pronounced the "R" sound with some difficulty, so that it sounded like prob-rem, but not quite.

"Seems I've always got one." Ben sighed. Sometimes he didn't know whether he'd been right in changing from a civilian plain-clothes cop to a military one. In civilian life, he reflected, crooks were somehow more normal, or at least more predictable than the cases he came up against in the Army. In the service everybody seemed to be a screwball, and this went double, as far as he could see, for Tokyo. "The problem today," he said, "could be a little embarrassing."

"Ah, so."

"To me, to GHQ, to the Far East Command, and the Department of Defense."

Nikki hissed sympathetically.

"It involves," said Ben, "the

beautiful daughter of a full bird colonel."

"Ah!" Nikki spoke now with more interest.

"Her name is Leah, and she's the daughter of Colonel Arthur T. Dangerfield of Plans and Operations. It's young Lieutenant Tom Harper who is worried about Leah. He's with the Economic Section. They do statistics on black market stuff, as you know. Well, to make it short, Leah Dangerfield is suddenly banking a lot of money and she's got no visible source for it. Recently she quit her job as a Department of the Army civilian stenographer. And now routine reports reveal she hangs around the *pachinko* place near the Ginza where several G.I.s have been arrested with black market stuff—cigarettes, drugs, technical equipment—on their persons."

"Ah, *pachinko,*" said Nikki. "Very interesting game."

"So I need your help again," said Ben.

"So." Nikki bowed modestly. "I am expert *pachinko* player. Can instruct—"

"I don't care about *pachinko.* I want to try to identify the man who's been contacting these G.I.s and buying the stuff from them. We'd put a stake-out on the joint, but our men'd stand out like sore thumbs in the Ginza. So, instead, we've had these G.I.s describe our Japanese buyer, and had our artist draw a composite portrait from the descriptions. I could try your R. & I. bureau, but I know *you've* got an even better file in your hand."

"Most frattered," said Nikki.

Ben took a photostat of a sketch from his pocket and handed it over.

Nikki studied it awhile, frowned, and finally said, "Not knowing with precision who is belong this face. I do not think have criminal record, or I know it. So. Maybe we better go *pachinko* place and looking. I am well knowing this place. Sometimes I take small-cut to office in the morning and pass by."

Ben looked doubtful. "We might hang around forever and not get a look at this character."

"But if he there one time," said Nikki, "he leaving part of himself."

"What's this, now?"

Nikki grinned, showing two aluminum teeth. "Your own great detective, Bertillonsan, he once say, 'Even if bird pass through air, will leave traces.' Is old Occidental proverb."

The *pachinko* place in question was just off the Ginza not far from the central shopping district. It was in one of the innumerable narrow streets in that vicinity, surrounded by tailor shops, toy shops, bicycle places, *o-sushi* restaurants, cafes and beer gardens. The alleys were thronged

with people, some in weird mixtures of old and modern dress. A man in a perfectly ordinary gray business suit, for instance, would clop along on high wooden *geta;* another man in a dark silk kimono would sport a western style gray felt upon his head. There was a sprinkling of G.I.s in summer khaki, Air Force silvertan or Navy white.

Ben and Nikki found a strategic table in an open-fronted cafe across from the *pachinko* house. Here they could see the entire street for some distance. Ben ordered iced coffee and Nikki a glass of that sweet, tasteless soft drink the Japanese call "cider."

Ben scowled doubtfully at the *pachinko* place. It was nothing more than an open shop space with banks of vertical pin-ball machines along the walls. There were, even this early, a dozen customers standing intently before the machines, jiggling little levers that sent steel *pachinko* balls upward, where they tumbled among pins and fell, if the players were lucky, into the right holes. *Pachinko,* Ben knew, was threatening to become Japan's national sport.

Suddenly he straightened in his seat and stared hard down the alley. A girl in a white shantung dress, white gloves and a large straw hat was crossing it, headed toward the *pachinko* place.

"Nikki!" Ben whispered.

Nikki didn't even look around. "So. Miss Leah Dangerfield, neh?"

Ben looked at Nikki in astonishment. "How did you know?"

"I tell you *mo-sugu*—pretty soon." Nikki now turned slowly and fixed his eyes, it seemed to Ben, not upon the girl who was crossing the street, but upon the small toy shop next to the *pachinko* place. Ben looked there, too, but he couldn't see anything but scores of brightly colored toys —trucks, wooden puzzles, wigs, samurai swords, paper fish-kites, slingshots, false faces, balloons.

He looked at Miss Dangerfield again. She had paused in front of the *pachinko* place, was looking into it. She was slim, moved in the quick, assured way of someone very young. Her hair was ash-blonde, her complexion thoroughly lovely. As they watched, she moved on suddenly, then stepped into the toy shop and started looking at the toys.

"Nikki," said Ben, "you know something. Come on, give."

"Please waiting *sukoshi* bit," said Nikki.

Then the proprietor of the toy shop, a short, squat, completely bald man, approached Miss Dangerfield and bowed. They saw him speak to her for a moment, probably in English, and after that she bought a small, clay Hotei-sama doll. Abruptly, a dark, slender Japanese in a sort of Hollywood drape suit slipped out

of the *pachinko* place and ducked into the toy shop. He held a long ivory cigarette holder. By this time the toy merchant had disappeared.

The slender Japanese sidled up to a book on the toy counter. Immediately she picked it up and stuffed it hastily into her woven straw shopping bag. The dark man ducked out and went back to the pinball shop again.

"Holy smoke, it's a pay-off if I ever saw one!" said Ben, his eyes widening. He started to get up.

At that point Leah Dangerfield headed suddenly across the street to where they sat. She caught sight of Ben staring at her and she paused, a frown creasing her forehead. Then she looked away from Ben and walked toward one of the other tables.

He crossed to her quickly, took her firmly by the arm and said, "Office of Special Investigation, Miss Dangerfield. I'm Sergeant Johnson. I want to talk to you." He showed his I.D. card.

She stared at him, wide-eyed, her face suddenly pale. But she said calmly, "Very well."

He took her back to the table, sat her down. She looked at him with restrained bewilderment. He said, "This is Inspector Nikkiyama, Tokyo Metropolitan Police. Would you care for an iced coffee, Miss Dangerfield? Or a cider?"

"Nothing, thank you." She met his eyes steadily.

Silently he told himself to stop liking this girl, stop admiring her self possession, and stop being intrigued by that not-miss-a-trick sharpness in her eyes. Nikki, he realized vaguely, was sitting back from the table, apparently writing something in his notebook.

"Miss Dangerfield," Ben said, "I wonder if you'd object to my examining your shopping bag?"

She said in an icy voice, "I certainly would."

Nikki suddenly pushed his soft drink bottle toward Ben. The cider had virtually disappeared. "Excuse," he said. "I think is *mushi*—insect—in cider. Please looking to confirm."

"Huh?" said Ben.

"Please looking," said Nikki, an edge of urgency in his voice.

Ben scowled, then took the bottle, slid it in front of him and stared into the neck of it. He was annoyed with Nikki for interrupting like this, and in such a cockeyed, irrelevant manner. And then suddenly he realized that a slip of paper, torn from Nikki's notebook was under the bottle. Through the clear glass he could see what Nikki had been writing all this time, in large block letters: NOT ARREST NOW! IMPORTANT!

Ben handed the bottle back to Nikki, stared at him.

"Is bug?" asked Nikki blithely.

"Yeah. There's a bug in the whole works, somewhere." Ben couldn't resist saying at least that much.

"Ah, so," said Nikki, unperturbed.

Ben turned to the girl again. "All right, Miss Dangerfield. If you object to my searching your bag, I guess I can't do it. You can go."

"Thank you," she said, without batting an eye.

"But remember, Miss Dangerfield—I'm watching you."

She rose. "Sergeant, I haven't the slightest idea what you're watching, and if I had it wouldn't be of the slightest concern to me. Good morning." She calmly walked off.

"Cool," said Ben, watching her. Then, as though with afterthought, he turned to Nikki. "All right, Inspector, explain. And it better be good. Maybe I just dropped the whole case where nobody can ever pick it up again."

"Is not time arresting girl yet," said Nikki easily.

"Not time? Why not? I saw her take a pay-off."

"So, neh? But let us find more information first from somebody else."

"Who?"

"Young Lieutenant Harper-san. That enjoys the sweetness with Miss Dangerfield. His office in GHQ, neh? Maybe we walk there, now. *Iki-masho*—let's go. I lecture for explanation as we walk."

They walked several blocks to the Dai-Ichi Building on Avenue A. Nikki interrupted his explanations now and then to discuss flower arrangements they saw occasionally in shop windows. His discussions were usually upon the critical side, for Geichi Nikkiyama was prouder of the second place he'd taken in flower arranging at the Hibiya Park Exhibit last year than he was of his attainments as a policeman. Ben Johnson bore these digressions with tight-lipped patience.

"This morning," said Nikki, "I remember I see beautiful American girl many times when I take small-cut past *pachinko* shop. Thinking is good chance we see young lady again if we go there. When you look surprise, I know you are seeing young lady coming along street."

"But what about this package that was slipped to her? Maybe we could have washed up the whole case fast if we'd—"

"Excuse. Do not think true black market pay-off so easy to see. This episode not professional criminal method. *Ano-ne*—looking to me most amateur."

"Even so, Nikki, it looked illegal. We should have nabbed them."

"Not yet. They are probably living one, two days more. Probably us also."

"Okay," said Ben, sighing, "have it your own way."

Lieutenant Tom Harper, Adjutant General Corps, United States Army, was a plausible young man

with an earnest expression and a crew hair cut. His only sign of deep concern as he sat at his desk was a tendency to puff a little too often on his cigarette.

Ben sat before the desk, and beside it Nikki perched on the edge of a chair, his face immobile, his hands resting with outstretched fingers upon his knees. He seemed almost in a trance as the Lieutenant talked, addressing himself chiefly to Ben.

"You see, Sergeant, I just can't believe it, knowing Leah as I do. She certainly didn't need money, and she didn't have to quit her job as a DAC. Yet—" he swallowed—"the evidence. The way it all jives. What am I supposed to think?"

"How long have you known Miss Dangerfield?" asked Ben.

"Over a year."

"Knew her well all this time, sir?"

"Well—we were planning to get married."

"*Omedeto.* Congratulations," murmured Nikki politely.

Harper glanced at him in a troubled way. "Well, not quite, Inspector. You see, I'm just a second lieutenant, without even my first fogie yet. That's longevity pay. Leah wouldn't mind getting married on my income, but I know what it would be like. You need a nest egg. I've been trying to save a little before—"

"Excuse please," said Nikki thoughtfully. "Not being angry now if asking what opportunity Miss Dangerfield have for obtaining black market merchandise."

"Opportunity?" Tom Harper frowned. "None that I know of. About the only black market stuff she could get, I suppose, would be her cigarette ration at the PX. She doesn't smoke. And six cartons a month, sold for seven hundred fifty yen apiece wouldn't make her rich."

"Ah, you know black market price, neh?"

"Of course. I'm in the Economic Section. We've been trying to cooperate with your government, Inspector, to keep this black market stuff down. It makes for inflation, even overvalues regular goods by creating new fortunes. That's how big it is. And certain enemies of ours would like nothing better than a runaway economy here in Japan to give their Party a chance to get in."

Nikki nodded, said, "Is sad fact." Then he rose. "Thanking you very much for talk. Maybe we have news pretty soon."

"Good or bad?"

"Ah," said Nikki, grinning, "for knowing that person needs fortune teller, not detective."

Nikki rode in the wood-burning taxi with its howling furnace where the luggage trunk ordinarily would be as they headed for O.S.I. headquarters. Ben said, "Well, what's on that bear-trap mind of yours now?"

"Please. You still have fine art

portrait from G.I.'s description?" Ben, frowning in some puzzlement, handed it over.

After studying it a moment Nikki said, "Is unusual face, neh?"

Ben said, "I thought so, too. I don't know why, unless it's just that our American artists can't draw Japanese faces well."

"Hair is most unusual," said Nikki.

"Why the hair?"

"Is curly."

"Well, some Japanese have curly hair, don't they?"

"Ah, so. But usual with thin face. Ainu type. This man face very round. And small eyes, like Eta. We call Eta sometimes *yotsu*—number four—because they have secret sign with four fingers. They are people something like your gypsy. Some say they come long ago from Korea. Nobody know for sure. But always have straight hair, neh?"

"Well, what's it mean?"

Instead of answering Ben's question Nikki said, "I have favor, Ben-san. Can you getting two G.I.-san who are pretty good actor, like Bogart-san in American movie?"

"Well, I don't know if I can get anybody Bogie's class. But I'll get actors. What do you want 'em for?"

"I think now with bear-trap mind we make mouse-trap," said Inspector Nikkiyama.

The next day Ben and Nikki sat again at the front table in the coffee shop across from the *pachinko* place. They sat there quite a while; long enough for Nikki to drink three ciders and Ben four iced coffees. Finally, two U.S. Army privates, apparently sight-seeing, wandered by the *pachinko* place, paused, looked around as though waiting for someone. They carried large, paper-wrapped bundles under their arms.

Ben and Nikki sat there, watching. The G.I.s stayed there for quite a while but nothing happened. Finally they wandered away.

"I wish you'd tell me what we're waiting for," said Ben.

"Observing please flowers in tailor shop across street," said Nikki.

"Nuts," said Ben.

The next day they arrived, as usual, about mid-morning. Before going to his table at the cafe Ben stopped in the *pachinko* shop and bought fifty yen's worth of steel balls at the counter. He tried flipping about forty of them, doing very badly. Suddenly Nikki tugged at his sleeve, said, "GI-san coming." Ben put the remaining ten balls in his pocket.

Ben's two G.I. agents, still carrying their plainly wrapped packages, were now entering the far end of the alley, strolling very casually, playing their parts well.

Not hurrying toward the *pachinko* place, not showing they were particularly aware of it in any way.

"Listen, Nikki," said Ben, "if any black marketeer sees us sitting here three days in a row like this, he'll never tip his hand in front of us."

"Excuse. Contrary, neh?" said Nikki. "If black-market-san see us one time maybe become fearful. But see us three times, then think maybe we are not detective. Thinking detective not so stupid coming out in open like this."

"I hope you're right. I hope the Oriental mind works like that."

"Ah, is not Oriental!" said Nikki. "Is reverse-English, neh?" Now the two strolling G.Is were near the *pachinko* shop. Nikki came alert, leaned toward Ben and said, "Please now taking good look at No-hair-san in toy shop."

Ben looked at the toy shop. The squat, stocky, bald proprietor had come out on the street and was unmistakably watching the two approaching G.I.s very closely. In a moment they drew abreast of him.

"Ah, good morning! Good morning, gentleman sirs!" the toy merchant said, stepping in front of them, bowing, hissing politely. "You like buy toys? Ah, very good toys! Best price in town for toys!"

"Naw, we ain't lookin' for toys," said one of the soldiers.

"But, please. Come in! Ah, show you half price. Maybe one-quarter price!"

Nikki whispered, "Crossing fingers now. Hoping your G.I. have smart head and go inside."

"One of my best men," Ben whispered back. "He'll do it."

The soldier shook his head a few more times, then turned to his companion, consulted with him. They both shrugged their shoulders, followed the bald-headed man into the toy shop.

"I hope you know what you're doing," said Ben, expelling a deep breath. "I sure hope so. If old bald head is trying to rig up a black market deal, that's all very well. But if Miss Dangerfield's connected with it, I don't see how we're going to get to her by just nabbing this guy."

"Please do not blow top yet," said Nikki mildly. "Please to look at alley."

At the end of the alley, perhaps fifty yards away, was Miss Leah Dangerfield, this time in a neatly tailored suit of buff-colored raw silk. She was striding purposefully toward the toy shop and a short distance behind her, dodging from doorway to doorway in a clumsy attempt at shadowing, was Second Lieutenant Tom Harper.

"Maybe," said Ben thoughtfully, "we'll nab everybody connected with this thing after all!"

"No, no," said Nikki hastily. "These people not connected. These people getting in way. Making all very difficult."

"What do you mean, Nikki?"

"Ben-san, you must tell both going away. Quick!"

"I don't get it."

"*Hayaku!* Quick. You must trusting me!"

Nikki hissed inwardly quite suddenly. "Too late, now!" he said. He nodded across the street at the toy shop. Ben's two agents were emerging, minus their packages.

Ben stood up. "Come on, Nikki, we've got to get in there before Skin-head has time to staish that black market stuff he just bought."

They crossed the alley quickly, went into the toy shop. The bald-headed merchant was about to step through a door into the back of his shop into what was evidently his living quarters.

He had the two packages, the wrappings now loose, under his arms. He glanced at Ben and Nikki, looked startled. Then abruptly he slammed the wood and translucent paper sliding door behind him.

Nikki said, "I following, Ben-san, you go around back!"

"Right," said Ben, turned, and ran out of the toy shop.

He bumped into Leah Dangerfield. She said, "Oh!" and reached for her hat, which he'd knocked askew.

"Sorry, no time to explain," he gasped, then started to run up the alley. At the end of it he could circle the block and enter the alley at the rear. Suddenly he stopped abruptly as Lieutenant Harper stepped out of a doorway and placed himself deliberately in front of Ben. His young, earnest eyes were blazing.

"I saw you slam into Leah!" he roared. "I saw you!"

"Look, lieutenant—please get out of my way."

"Out of your way? Well, nobody can bump into my girl like that, and—"

"Excuse me for this, sir," said Ben as he brought a big fist up, very fast, and swung his weight with superb timing behind it. He caught Lieutenant Harper flush on the jaw. He didn't knock him out, but he knocked him down.

Behind him he heard Leah Dangerfield cry out. The sound came from inside the toy shop.

He whirled, ran to a side window of the shop. Leah was standing at the front counter, staring toward the back of the shop. Her mouth and eyes were both wide with terror. Her white gloved hand was at her throat.

Ben's eyes followed her stare and he saw Geichi Nikkiyama, walking backward and with his hands raised at shoulder level. And then he saw the toy seller. He was not walking backward, as Nikki was, and furthermore he had a small, black automatic pistol in his hand.

Ben began to run back the way he'd come, heading for the front door of the toy shop.

"Oh, yes—I get away!" cried the toy dealer. He stood there, his gun holding them at bay.

Ben realized sadly that the man was right. All he needed was a head start of a minute or two, and after that even a ferret squad of Tokyo police wouldn't be able to pick up his trail in all the alleys and warrens around the Ginza. He considered trying to jump him now, before it was too late. He did not do this for two reasons. One, if he could have been jumped Nikki would have done it by now.

Nikki, his hands still held upward at the behest of the gun muzzle, said, "Ben-san, this is black market man in artist picture. Not having hair, neh? But usually wearing wig when meet G.I. Same wig he is having in toy shop. Please, I am guessing correctly, Black-market-san?"

The bald man growled, *"Shizuka-ni!"* and Ben knew that meant, "Quiet—shut up!"

The bald man said to Leah, "Come in front me—hurry quick —" Wide-eyed, the girl obeyed. Ben cursed as he saw the move.

Holding the gun on the girl, the toy dealer used her to protect himself as he moved to the door. If they tried to jump him he would shoot the girl.

As the toy merchant reached the door and turned to flee up the alley, Ben moved. He moved fast. He was in motion almost before the bald man completed his turn.

He leaped to the counter, scooped up a slingshot from it with his left hand. At the same time he plunged his right hand into his pocket, took out a handful of *pachinko* balls left over from his try at the game earlier, slapped them into the sling. He took quick aim and let the balls fly at the bald man's retreating figure.

The missiles struck the back of the black marketeer's head. They did not hurt him seriously because they were too light. But they disconcerted him enough to make him half-turn, stumble, slap at the back of his head. And the turn caused him to bump into two strolling Japanese business men who were as yet unaware of what was going on. He dropped his gun, lost his balance as he stooped to retrieve it.

The man tried to roll around and fire as Ben got to him, and Ben kicked the gun from his hand. He bent, yanked him upright by the lapels, grabbed one of his hands and spun him about quickly into an arm lock. By this time several people were gathered about in an awed circle.

Nikki came trotting up followed by Leah Dangerfield and Lieutenant Tom Harper, who was still dazed a little, and rubbing his jaw.

"Ah! Very excellent judo!" said Nikki, nodding at Ben's armlock. "Very good."

"Thank you. I learned it in

Los Angeles," said Ben Johnson.

"Would somebody mind telling me," said Leah Dangerfield, cool and self-possessed once more, "what this is all about?"

"Me, too," growled Lieutenant Harper.

"Lady—Lieutenant—" said Ben, nodding at both in turn, "I've got a few things to learn about it myself. Follow us. . . ."

Later, in the booking room at M.P. headquarters, just across from Hibiya Park, Nikki explained the whole thing. The bald toy merchant, whose name was Hazakaya, was in the tank, being booked and searched. Leah and Harper and Ben listened as Nikki talked.

Nikki looked at Leah, a twinkle of amusement in his usually bland expression. "Excuse. Thinking you better tell young man your secret now. I never believing that *pachinko* place is black market place. Too open, too many people watching all the time, neh? But when Lieutenant-san telling me about needing money for getting married—ah—then I *sukoshi*—just a little—guessing what is truth. You tell all now, neh?"

"What's this, Leah?" said Harper. "A secret? What secret?"

"Oh, Tom, darling, maybe I shouldn't have done it," said Leah, taking his hand in hers.

"I wanted a nest egg for us quickly, dear, so I decided to buy an interest in a profitable business. Nothing in Tokyo makes money more quickly, or from a smaller investment, than a *pachinko* gallery. I bought into that one on the Ginza for just a few hundred dollars. That's why I had to go there so often, to check my cut of the profits. And darling, the few hundred's already grown to a thousand!"

The lieutenant looked stunned. He gasped, "You shouldn't have done that! Leah—"

"Are we going to have our first quarrel on account of it?" she said softly.

Harper stared at her for a moment, then sighed. "No, I guess not." He took her in his arms.

Nikki grinned at them.

Ben said, "So that package the boy from the *pachinko* brought to you in the toy shop was your cut of the take in the *pachinko?* A *legit* payoff."

She nodded, gave him a dazzling smile.

"Come on, Inspector," said Ben.

They walked out of the front door together. Nikki said after they'd walked a while, "Ben-san, you seeing flowers on M.P. captains desk in there? Most abominable arrangement. Putting white orchid in arrangement with red poinsettia very bad taste. . . ."

Ben grinned. "But the Lieutenant and Leah arrange pretty nicely, don't they?"

"Ah, so!" said Nikki, and sighed a romantic sigh.

fatal oversight

by . . . Ray Cummings

His intention was not criminal. He wanted only to help her. Why did his mind and hand betray him?

THE MORNING SUN never came into George Heywood's studio. He liked it for that; liked the somber restfulness of it. The huge leather chairs, the big mahogany center-table, so square and solid and the many rows of books lining the walls—all seemed in keeping with his own well-ordered life.

His secretary followed him unobtrusively into the room, laying the morning's mail upon the desk. Then he stood waiting.

Heywood spread his hands to the blazing log fire for a moment, and then he noticed the secretary. "Yes, Atwell," he said, "what is it?"

"A lady, sir, to see you."

"Here—now?"

"Downstairs. Yes, sir."

"What's her name?"

"She hoped you'd see her without her giving it."

"Well—all right, Atwell. I'll talk to her."

Half-past nine in the morning, and a lady who made a mystery of her identity! Nice way to start

Stark tragedy can lurk in good intentions, and Ray Cummings is adept at shedding a chilling and often gruesome light on that particular aspect of reality. He's adept, too, at tracing the scarlet thread of a wicked subconscious urge until it tightens, nooselike, about the throats of its unsuspecting victims. Was there such a thread in this yarn? We'll leave that for you to decide, for the doubt itself is psychologically fascinating.

the day when you had important business to attend to.

Five minutes later the door opened. Haywood stared, then rose to his feet with a startled exclamation.

The woman stood by the center-table, loosening her furs. She was very young. Twenty-two perhaps —no more. Her face was small, delicately oval, with big wistful eyes.

"You're surprised to see me, aren't you?" she asked.

Heywood could only nod. "Won't you sit down?" he managed to say.

She sank into the big leather easy chair, looking at him with her splendid eyes. "You're surprised—" she began again.

"Well, naturally," he admitted. "After two years and—"

"And—and all the rest of it," finished the woman nervously.

Two years! Had it really been that long? A period first of pain; then of a dull, hopeless longing. He had managed to carry on, but always with the pain locked away, deep in his heart.

He sat down opposite her, his face suddenly haggard. "Why did you come, Anne?" he asked, and waited.

The woman was very pale. "I —I shouldn't have come," she stammered. "You, of all people."

"You're in trouble," he said, gently.

Her eyes stared straight at him, unseeing.

"Tell me, Anne, what is it?" he asked, almost gruffly. "Is it about your husband?"

"Yes," she said.

"What is it?" There was no answer; only a tightening of her lips. Her husband! That weakling! How could a woman— "What is it?" he persisted.

"Jim's in trouble."

"How?"

"He's taken some of their money."

Some of their money! Of course; that was it. Surprising he had gone straight with the firm so long.

"When did he take it?" His tone was even. He spoke almost casually.

"A week ago. The bank examiner's coming this afternoon."

"What did he do with the money?"

"I don't know. He says he lost it."

The bank examiner! In a few hours. There was no time to lose. Heywood had left his chair, and was pacing the room before her.

"Where is Jim now?" he asked.

"At the bank. He only told me last night. He—he said it was all my fault. He said I wanted pretty things."

Heywood swore. Naturally the scoundrel had blamed it on her! "What's Jim going to do?" he asked, abruptly stopping in front of her.

"Give himself up. Kill himself, maybe. He'll go to jail.

George, can't you see—*he'll go to jail!*"

Heywood waited. "How much money?" he asked, after a time.

"Eight thousand dollars."

"Will they know Jim took it?"

"Yes."

"How can you be sure?"

"He says they will. George, he's desperate. I'm afraid of what he may do."

Heywood sat on the arm of her chair. "You came to me," he said. His voice had softened.

The woman lowered her lashes, the faint beginning of a flush tinging her cheek. "Yes," she said softly.

"Does *he* know you came?"

She hesitated, then looked up at him. "No," she answered finally.

He looked straight into her eyes. "Anne, you're lying," he said, and waited.

She covered her face with her hands and nodded. "Yes." Her voice was choked with emotion. "He sent me."

"Didn't you want to come?" He spoke very tenderly, his hand resting gently on her shoulder.

"No!" she exclaimed vehemently.

"Why not?"

"I'd rather die," she said, and twisted her hands.

"But you came?" He tried to keep his voice steady, tried to restrain his anger against her miserable husband while he fought down his desire to take her in his arms.

"He—he said you might help," she whispered, refusing to meet his eyes.

"Was that what he *told* you to say?" Heywood's voice was gentle, but his face was set and hard.

"He said because you were rich you wouldn't refuse me. You wouldn't let him go to prison."

"Because I love you," he finished. "Is that it, Anne?"

"Yes," said the woman softly, "that's what he said."

How pathetic she looked, sitting there biting her lip, and struggling with the tears! He loved her! He always had loved her!

"Do you wish me to do as he wants, Anne?" he asked.

She nodded. The tears welled up in her eyes, streaked her pale cheeks.

Heywood slid his arm over her shoulder, and turned her face to his. "Anne," he said, "look at me, Anne."

The woman pulled away.

"Do you still love me?" he asked softly.

"Yes," she murmured, "you know I do."

"You have always loved me? Ever since—"

"Ever since the very first," she finished, and bowed her head.

Heywood drew a long breath. She had never wavered in her love for him as she had never wavered in her loyalty to her husband. Loyal above everything just as she had always been! And

yet she loved him still and knew that he still loved her. Heywood waited through a moment of silence.

"And afterwards?" he asked.

She raised her hands impulsively toward him, then dropped them in her lap.

He leaned closer over her. "Is there no hope?"

She shook her head. She was crying softly.

No hope! Always the same answer! How it hurt, and how he loved her for it! Heywood rose abruptly.

"Eight thousand dollars," he said, and went over to the desk.

He wrote a check rapidly, talking as he wrote. "This check is drawn to bearer, so be careful of it," he cautioned. "You will take it to the bank—my bank, the Second National. The bank is open by now. Do you understand, Anne?"

The woman stared straight before her, unseeing. "I understand," she said, mechanically.

Heywood handed her the check. "I love you, Anne," he said.

She folded the check and put it in her glove, while he stood before her, waiting.

"You'd better start, Anne," he said finally.

She rose and stood beside him, swaying a little. "I'd better start," she said numbly.

He followed her to the door. "Good-by, Anne," he said.

"Good-by!" she answered, and went out, her shoulders held rigid.

Heywood went back to his library table, and sat in the big chair before it.

So this was the end! Back into his life she had come and out again in an instant, leaving it more empty, more desolate than ever.

Noon came and still he sat. Later, a maid spoke to him of lunch, but he waved her away.

Everything would be all right by now. Jim would have put the money back by now! Damned scoundrel! Blame a woman! Bank examiner there by this time. Fussy little man probably. With chin whiskers! Or maybe fat, with glasses! Everything would be in order. *He* had fixed that for her. Thank God, he had been able!

The maid replenished the fire for the third time, but Heywood did not notice her. Then, hours later it may have been, his secretary brought in the evening paper.

"Thank you, Atwell," he said.

He sat down, and spread the paper on the table casually. His face went white.

The headlines swam before his eyes: DEFAULTING BANK CASHIER ARRESTED. And then the horror—the companion headline: WIFE COMMITS SUICIDE.

In a flash, George Heywood realized the tragic consequences of his carelessness for his eye caught the words in smaller type: . . . *with an unsigned check in her hand* . . .

—Continued from back cover

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Three women make this one a puzzler. The *first* appears in court and says she saw Perry's client at *the scene of the crime.* The *second* shouldn't have appeared at all—but did. The *third* was slated to be Perry's star witness—*but she disappeared completely!*

3 The Case of The GRINNING GORILLA

When Helen Cadmus disappears, Mason isn't sure it's murder. But when he discovers a CORPSE—he knows *this is murder!* But Mason may never LIVE to solve it! For he suddenly finds himself face to face with a monstrous gorilla — *with a long carving knife in his hairy hand!*

4 The Case of The MOTH-EATEN MINK

Mason finds the girl the police have been looking for. "There's a man in room 851," she sobs. "Wants to KILL me!" Just then the police burst into the room. "Don't move!" they order. "A man has been killed in room 851 — *you're both wanted for MURDER!*"

5 The Case of The ANGRY MOURNER

Belle Adrian, Mason's client, is pale as a ghost. A witness SWEARS he saw Belle at the scene of the murder. And Exhibit "A" — the *murder* weapon — is Belle's OWN GUN!

6 The Case of The FIERY FINGERS

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—Continued on inside cover

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